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A Modern Disciple

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A MODERN DISCIPLE

BY

ARTHUR JENKINSON

MINISTER OF THE PARISH OF INNELLAN.

"I am the Light of the World: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life."—JESUS.

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TO THE READER.

THIS book on Modern Discipleship is sent forth in the hope that it may help some, more especially young men and women who are thrown into the midst of life in our great cities with all their varied interests, ambitions, struggles, dangers. The position of such is often strangely pathetic and tragic. We are living in a new age—an epoch of unrest and criticism, of fierce competitions and temptations, of new ideals and standards of duty. The most experienced amongst us often stand dismayed and bewildered at the rush of new thoughts, the throng of competing opinions, the depth and seriousness of modern speculations, the vastness of the issues at stake. And therefore all who have gone through sore travail of spirit, and to any extent succeeded in winning clearness of view, must deeply sympathise with those brothers and companions still in great tribulation, and especially those who, in the beginning of life, and often with little help or sympathy, are endeavouring to reconcile the old and the new, to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff, to discover what they must surrender and what they must retain, and who are trying to apply what principles they feel

secure to the many exigencies of modern life. I have not written for the professional student, although I hope that, should such read this little book, they will find nothing out of harmony with the best thought of the age. Many burning questions I have, for the present, left untouched.

But I have endeavoured to put myself in the position of a young man, enthusiastic in his desire to realise the highest ideal of life, but who is thrown into society where the intellectual and moral battles are most fierce, and the dangers and temptations most real. I have sought to deal with the questions that have appeared most urgent. In the first chapters I have put down some leading features of my ideal of the Christian Life. Then follow five chapters on Fundamental Beliefs, in which I endeavour to maintain the reality of man's Spiritual and Immortal nature, to clear away certain misconceptions regarding God's relations to man that hinder faith in His Absolute Righteousness and Love, and to justify faith in the Moral Order of the world and in the glorious Dignity and Destiny of mankind. A few chapters follow in which, under old familiar Bible names, I set forth some of those Moral Dangers and Temptations of modern life to the reality of which our newspapers bear an almost daily testimony.

Last of all, the book deals with that conception of life as a generous Service for the welfare of Humanity, which is one of the noblest ideas of this or any age. Each chapter is complete in itself, and occasionally

the reader may meet with a repetition of the same idea, but presented from a somewhat different point of view. I hope, however, he will find that the book forms a connected course of thought. The quotations printed opposite to the page on which each chapter begins will, I trust, not only enrich the volume, but indicate the line of thought; they not unfrequently constitute the text from which the subject is drawn. That this little book may help some Modern Disciples in their struggles to follow the Great Master is my earnest desire.

A. J.

The Manse, Innellan,
Argyllshire, 1892.

CONTENTS.

HIS IDEALS.

		PAGE
I.	THE ABSOLUTE IDEAL	1
II.	THE LARGENESS OF LIFE	17
III.	TWO WORLDS ARE OURS	31
IV.	THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SPIRIT	47

HIS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS.

V.	RELIGION AND SCIENCE	61
VI.	THE GOSPEL AND HEREDITY	77
VII.	THE VALUE OF A MAN	91
VIII.	FAITH IN THE MORAL ORDER OF THE WORLD	105
IX.	THE SOLIDARITY OF THE RACE	121

HIS POSSIBILITIES AND DANGERS.

X.	SAMSON IN THE LAP OF DELILAH	135
XI.	GEHAZI; OR, MODERN TEMPTATIONS UNDER OLD FORMS	151
XII.	JOSEPH; OR, THE MORAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN LIFE	167
XIII.	IS SAUL AMONG THE PROPHETS?	183

HIS LIFE OF MINISTRY.

XIV.	THE SERVICE OF GOD AND THE SERVICE OF MAN	203
XV.	THE SERVICE OF MAN	219
XVI.	A MAN A HIDING-PLACE FROM THE WIND	237
XVII.	CHRIST'S DISCOURAGEMENT OF INTOLERANCE	251
XVIII.	THE CRY FOR MORE ROOM	267

Ideals.

THE ABSOLUTE IDEAL.

" Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou :
Our wills are ours, we know not how ;
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

"Behold the Man!"—John xix. 5.

"For it pleased the Father, that in Him should all fulness dwell."—Col. i. 19.

"Jesus said unto him, 'Follow Me.'"—Matt. viii. 22.

"The philosophers had said, 'Accept our ideas, adopt our systems;' but Christ said, 'Accept Me.'"—Dr. Munger, *Freedom of Faith*, p. 115.

"It seems to us that in strict speaking we should not say that the life of Christ reveals a type of character; it would be more correct to say that it combines all types. . . . Within this life of the Son of Man all the great types of the sons of men are as perfectly fused as are the minor and major notes in a piece of music."—Dr. Matheson, *Landmarks of New Testament Morality*, p. 248.

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest."

I.

THE ABSOLUTE IDEAL.

Every man has his limitations. The fact that he is strong in some particular direction implies that he is relatively weak on the opposite side of his nature. In only One, Christ Jesus, does all fulness dwell, and therefore He is the mark and goal of all moral progress. No one but Christ can be our Ideal; for all except Him are defective somewhere. We see this especially to be true in great men. They have, it is said, the defects of their greatness. For men who rise to distinction are those in whom there is some special gift which makes them strong in particular ways. Thus one of the great men of modern times, Charles Darwin, lamented that although in his youth he loved art, music, poetry; yet after he had surrendered himself to scientific studies, he lost all capacity to enjoy them. His mind, he says, seemed to become a kind of machine for grinding general laws out of large collections of facts; but with reference to other tastes and interests, appeared quite dead. And what is true of the greatest is true of all. Every man is imperfect he is but a broken and flickering ray of the eternal fulness.

And the result is that in the school of moral discipleship, whilst we may learn much from our fellow-men, as we gaze on their isolated excellences, no one of them is capable of presenting a perfect ideal. Just as a rose or lily may have remarkable loveliness, and yet is never perfect; so no man, however good or great, can set forth the full splendour of Humanity. Each man may teach us some aspect of what our life would be if it were complete; but no man can represent it in its blended and harmonious glory. Each man can give out some particular ray of that perfect splendour; but the best and holiest are but broken lights, mutilated statues, partial and fragmentary hints of the glory that excelleth. And therefore no man can say: "I am the Light of the world: I am the Absolute Ideal."

But this is what Christ claims to be. Christianity claims that it presents an Absolute and Final Standard for mankind. It declares that the Person whom it sets forth as the central fact of the Gospel is One who gathers up, and blends into one perfect beam of light, all the scattered and broken rays we find elsewhere. And the wisest and best of men have studied that Ideal and admitted the claim. The world has gazed on Jesus for nearly two thousand years, and still confesses that it can find no fault in Him. He is absolutely unique. He stands alone in history. He is the One Perfect Flower without a stain, the Ideal of all that man can ever be. And thus men are coming to see that He is the supreme wonder of the Gospel, the

miracle of miracles, and that the most interesting questions connected with Christianity gather round that unique and beautiful Figure.

It is at this point the whole question of Modern Christian Discipleship opens up. We live in an age of criticism, of profound unrest, and of manifest transition. Long-established beliefs regarding the Bible, and all religious and Christian ideas, are assailed on all sides, and many of them are likely to be greatly modified in the near future. Young people no sooner feel that they should reach some definite religious decision than they seem to be involved in a whole series of preliminary questions. "Amidst the wilderness of evidence of all kinds, the man of culture not unnaturally gets dazed and paralysed by all these cross-claims on his judgment, and so it happens that in his mind culture tends to outgrow Christianity. In relation to all aspects of it, he finds in himself a number of half-matured thoughts and half-finished trains of reasoning, and his mind becomes a mass of suspended judgments and postponed investigations."[1] And if those questions are all of them to be first settled, it is hard to say when the life of discipleship will, or can begin. But is this necessary? Is it even the right method of approaching the Christian life? Have these theological and critical questions directly to do with the matter? The early disciples saw Jesus. They were attracted to the Person. They did not understand Him, but they felt the beauty of His character, and

[1] From *Spectator*, Nov. 20, 1886.

were drawn by the spiritual magnetism of His life and words to follow Him. And so they became disciples.

Why cannot we begin in just the same way? Whatever doubts are raised, they do not concern the Moral Ideal which Christianity presents. The highest culture of this nineteenth century accepts that. On its ethical side Hegelianism is identical with the essential idea of Christianity.[1] Here is a path into the very heart of the Gospel about which there is absolutely no dispute: "In a moral point of view, the world may abandon Christianity, but it can never advance beyond it. . . . The moral efforts of all ages, to the consummation of the world, will be efforts to realise this character."[2] Even the late John Stuart Mill, as is well known, gave expression to words to the same effect. "Even," he said, "an unbeliever could not find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete, than to endeavour so to live as that Christ would approve our life."[3]

By common consent, then, here is an open door through which all who are enthusiastic for the highest moral excellence can forthwith enter the Christian life. All these subjects of controversy do not vitally touch this region. The way is quite open, and it leads direct to Christ. To be a Christian is to follow Christ: to make His life and character regnant in your life. Discipleship can mean no more and no less than that.

[1] Caird's "Hegel," p. 203.
[2] Goldwin Smith's "Lectures on Study of History."
[3] Essay on Religion, p. 253.

There is the Ideal, acknowledged by all the highest Ideal of Humanity, and the vital question is: Are we willing to surrender ourselves to it? I do not say that those other discussions are without interest or importance. I do not think so: we shall consider some of them later on. But it makes a great practical difference whether we take them up as disciples of Christ, as those who are convinced that they owe Him their highest spiritual allegiance, or as those who are drifting about without moral and spiritual anchorage. We start then with this principle, that all those are truly Christ's disciples who sincerely acknowledge Him as their Master and Lord; who heartily submit themselves to the Ideal of moral goodness which He presents, and who earnestly endeavour to follow His Life and Teaching.

We have been told that to "reconceive the Christ is the special task of this age." We sincerely accept the statement, and from our standpoint the duty is urgent and paramount. Our interest in all other questions relating to Christianity is subordinate to this. We want to get into the presence of the Master. We want to understand Him, and feel the inspiration of His life upon us. But this is not easy. "The ecclesiastical Christ is to a large extent not the Christ of the Gospels, but a creation of scholastic theology. . . . The religious spirit of Jesus, His attitude towards the religion in vogue in Judea in His time, and its grounds, His humane sympathies, His thoughts of God, His ethical ideal, have been allowed to fall into the background."[1]

[1] Bruce's "Kingdom of God," p. 330.

What has been allowed to fall into the background we desire to bring prominently forward. We have but slight interest in the "ecclesiastical Christ," but we have a profound desire to know the Christ of the Gospels. We desire to place Him before our minds, as the artist would stand before a work of one of the great masters, and to study Him. We are moral and spiritual artists, and would gather help and guidance for our great work by gazing with reverence and love on our great Prototype, the One whom all acknowledge to be the Absolute Ideal of Humanity.

We go straight to our task by considering, in this chapter, one or two aspects of the Absolute Ideal of special interest in relation to modern life.

And the first is that in Christ we see the absolute fusion of moral Inflexibility with moral Graciousness. This is a union of qualities we cannot hope to perfectly accomplish ourselves, and yet it is an ideal to hold steadily before the mind and strive after. It is this fusion we need in order to fit us to deal wisely with the great practical problems that are coming up for solution. For high moral characters tend to form themselves round the opposite poles of grandeur or graciousness. They excite our reverence because of their strength, or they win our admiration on account of their sweetness. Here is a man whom you would hardly say you loved, but whom you would acknowledge you respected. He moves about like an incarnate conscience. There is something almost appalling in his sense of the imperativeness of the moral law. He

is inflexible in righteousness. His honour is unstained. In every question he goes straight to the moral issue, and the result is that he seems hard, stern, puritanically austere. And here is another in whom there is perfect graciousness, sympathy, pitifulness. He would not form one of the strong foundations or pillars of society. He is not a man to fight battles or to submit to martyrdom; but he is most tender, gracious, forgiving. He displays the fragrant and beautiful flowers of the Christian life. And thus we see those who win reverence by their moral nobleness and strength, and others who win admiration by their moral loveliness and sweetness; but we never see the two features of character absolutely fused and melted into one.

And because of this there is no individual except Christ who can be taken as a universal and final ideal. We never meet with one who calls forth unmeasured homage because of his perfect moral grandeur and strength, and who at the same time calls forth unmeasured love because of his perfect moral beauty and graciousness. But the two aspects are so vital that we can drop neither, and are sure that a perfect man would combine and fuse them. He would be strong and yet tender, just and yet merciful, pure and yet pitiful toward the fallen. He would be absolutely faithful to righteousness, conscience, duty; and yet remain tender, gracious, loving. And he would not exhibit these apparently antagonistic principles in turns, and so merely display a character at variance with itself. We all do that. We feel that in him

these diverse elements would be fused, reconciled, combined; so that when we looked on such a person we should behold in the region of the spiritual life, what we find in nature and in the highest art—the combination of strength and beauty. The mighty tree, with its great roots that anchor it firmly in the ground, and its vast branches that have tossed off the storms of a thousand winters, is strong, is the very symbol of majestic strength; and yet as it stands clothed with its ample foliage, in the richness of summer, it is equally an object of loveliness. And as you walk through the splendid aisles of some ancient cathedral on which generations of builders have lavished their thought and love, you find both beauty and strength; there is perfect harmony, symmetry, and consistency. And that is what we feel a perfect human character would be.

Now when we turn to the Ideal which Christianity presents we find our anticipations completely realised. Here is One of whom we may say with absolute confidence that He is the Perfect and Final Standard of goodness; for in Him are fused together in indissoluble union moral grandeur and moral beauty, justice and mercy, inflexibility and graciousness. You can yield Him unqualified reverence and unqualified love.

Professor Huxley has asked[1] what kind of being he is to conceive in Jesus Christ; whether he is to think of Him as "the kindly, peaceful Christ depicted in the Catacombs," or as "the stern judge who frowns above the altar of SS. Cosmas and Damianus." The truth is

[1] *Nineteenth Century*, 1889.

He is neither the one nor the other. Christ was often stern, but His sternness never detracted from the beauty of His gentleness. It is in the Gospel in which we behold His exquisite tenderness most fully revealed that we find some of His sternest statements. In Him these opposite elements are so blended that they go together into every scene; so that in His most tender words you find an undertone of moral rigour, and over His deeds and words of utmost sternness there falls the shadow of His pity. When He looked on men "with anger" He was at the same moment "grieved," and when He invited the "weary and heavy laden" to come to Him, and He would give them rest, He spoke also of His "yoke" and His "burden." When He pronounced the doom of Jerusalem, He wept over the city. And when we ask the reason for this fusion in Him of opposite types of character, the answer is, that Christ was the absolute embodiment of the principle of Love; and love is at once inexorable and tender, just and merciful. Perfect Love is perfect moral grandeur and moral beauty. And thus it is He claims absolute allegiance; for He sets forth the Final Standard, the whole fulness of human excellence; and just so far as we are able to combine these elements in our own lives shall we be prepared to deal with the delicate and complicated problems of modern life.

Closely related to the thought we have been just considering, indeed the same idea seen from another point of view, is that Jesus presents the Absolute Ideal, because in Him is the fusion of those opposite elements

of character we associate with the idea of Sex. We behold in Him a life not stamped exclusively with the peculiar mark of either manhood or womanhood. Now the moral and spiritual differences that divide men and women are very profound, and yet beneath them, we are sure, there must lie a real identity. And therefore, in proportion as a character becomes complete, is there a tendency in these differences to combine. It has been remarked that in most men of highest genius you can detect something womanly, some suggestion of this combination in them of what is both manly and womanly. And yet we have never seen a person in whom this union was harmonious and perfect. We do not look for the full beam, the perfect fulness of Humanity in either sex, but expect each to find its perfection in fellowship with the other.

But it is essential to our idea of One who was to be the Absolute Ideal for both men and women that He should unite in Himself the excellences of both manhood and womanhood. If every woman as well as every man was to find in Him the ideal of life, then He must set forth humanity as it is in that higher unity, where the excellences of the sexes blend in perfect and glorious harmony. And that, in fact, is what we have just found. We have found that the manly virtues were all in Him, and yet they were so suffused and penetrated with the charm and grace that are distinctly womanly, that you see the two spiritual natures perfectly fused in Him. And thus it is that both men and women may turn to Him and

find in His perfect humanity the type, the ideal, the perfection of their own lives.

Now passing to a somewhat different order of thought, I remark that we, as Modern Disciples of Christ, should specially notice the fact that in Him you see blended profound spirituality, with a vivid interest in all that is truly human. It is a very rare thing to meet with a person who is thoroughly penetrated with the realities of the spiritual life, and at the same time truly alive to the claims of this world. It is not an uncommon thing to meet with Christians who live an intense spiritual life, to whom communion with God and faith in unseen things are living experiences, and it is also common enough to meet with others to whom this world is everything. But what is unusual is to meet with one who lives equally in the two spheres; to whom, in fact, the earthly and the heavenly life have become one. There are very few who seem able to lift up their daily life into the sphere of religion: so that whatsoever they do, they do it unto the Lord, and who are able to bring the spiritual life down to earth, so that it pervades and sanctifies the whole of it. To be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to delight in everything that makes this life attractive and beautiful, and yet to find God everywhere; to love art, and music, and literature, and to delight in home and country, and yet to love God with heart, and soul, and strength, is a rare achievement. There are few who are truly and deeply interested in all that goes to make up man's varied life in this world, and who at the same time keep the heart

free from a worldly and sordid spirit. Indeed there are many spiritually-minded people who think sincere and thorough devotion to Christ is quite incompatible with an eager interest in the affairs of this world. It is true that many who emphasise this view, reveal a strong tendency towards Mammon worship; their spirituality permits a very eager interest in money-making; but art, and society, and science, and literature, and music, and dancing are, they think, quite inconsistent with the love of God. Others again attempt a wretched compromise; religion on the Sundays, the world all other days of the week. A saint for a few hours in church, and an utter worldling elsewhere.

But every really healthy mind feels all this to be miserably wrong. God did not make this world that we might despise it. He did not create us spiritual beings that we might bury our souls beneath a heap of worldliness. The ideal life is one that blends and harmonises every true interest. It is at home in the spiritual sphere, and yet open to every pure present interest. The highest life is one that loves all good and beautiful things; it is at home in society, in business, in politics; it delights in nature, and in all that can adorn and enrich life here, and make man's existence in this world a refined and noble and stately thing; and yet amid it all it remains devout, true-hearted, consecrated to Christ, filled with a sense of the supreme and eternal realities. A saint and yet in the world; a disciple of Christ and yet interested in this life, doing its work, loving all good and beauti-

ful things, and yet free from the spirit of the mere worldling.

Such is the life to which a Modern Disciple is called, and when we turn to Christ we find a full justification of it. The moment He stepped upon the scene in Palestine it was felt that an absolutely new representation of the ideal life was made. Here was one utterly unworldly, and yet He was not another John the Baptist. John hurried into the wilderness that he might escape the world's pollution; but the Son of Man came eating and drinking. He looked around Him with a most genial gaze. The whole universe was His Father's House; this world was one of its many mansions; He went to the marriage feast and blessed it. He turned the water into wine; He loved society; He loved nature. He cast no cold or averted look on man's present life; and yet He felt God and heaven and eternal things ever near. He always moved in the consciousness of their presence.

Here, then, for the present, we must close our meditation on the Absolute Ideal. Let us try, in a few words, to sum up the position. We live in a remarkable age—an age of transition, of theological unrest; and the question of Christian Discipleship no sooner comes up than we seem to be confronted by a whole series of debated questions. But we have found that one path remains open, and that it leads us directly into the presence of the Christ of the Gospels. Amid all the controversies of our time the Moral Ideal which Christianity presents, remains practically unquestioned.

Men of all sorts of opinions admit Christ to be final and complete. They all tell us that the world cannot outgrow Him; that He can never lose the allegiance of those who are enthusiastic for goodness. And we know that to be a Disciple really means trying to be like Jesus, to love what He loved, to hate what He hated; to participate in His Spirit. Here, then, is the Ideal, and the Modern Disciple is called to put himself under His inspiration and guidance. And as soon as we have attempted to do this we find that Christ helps us to solve our intellectual and practical difficulties. This world presses upon us; we cannot ignore it. People sometimes tell us that we are to give up the world; but Christ does not ask us to give it up. He asks us to realise the spiritual in the material, the heavenly in the earthly, the divine in the human. Our Ideal Man, the God-Man, reveals to us moral grandeur and moral graciousness; all that can refine and beautify manhood, and strengthen and elevate womanhood. The Modern Disciple is called to reproduce the Christ-Life.

THE LARGENESS OF LIFE.

"'Tis Life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh Life, not death, for which we pant;
More Life, and fuller, that I want."

"He brought me forth into a large place."—Ps. xviii. 19.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—John ix. 10.

"If you want expansion, exhilaration, inspiration, life, come out into the large, free world of the truth, the righteousness, the love of God."—Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 138.

"God wishes for no narrow-hearted souls or empty heads for His children, but those whose spirits are rich in the knowledge of Him."—Hegel, *Philosophy of History*.

"In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied.
And hearts in poorest huts admire
How love has in their aid
(Love that not ever seems to tire)
Such rich provision made."—Trench.

II.

THE LARGENESS OF LIFE.

A CELEBRATED German lawyer[1] once wrote a book in which he related the story of a young man who, when a child, was confined in a dark and solitary dungeon, and only liberated when his stunted life had become a pathetic mockery of manhood. The title of the book was, "A Crime against the Life of the Soul."

There are many crimes against the life of the soul, but none more common than its imprisonment in a place too small for it. God formed man on a grand scale. Life was intended to be large, rich, full. And to live less free, less royally than we were meant to live, is a crime against the soul.

And yet, on all hands, you hear complaints about the littleness of life. Men say it is dull, insignificant, narrow. And not a few complain justly. For it is sad to think within what cruel limitations many are compelled to pass their lives. But others can only blame themselves. They hide the wide sky with curtains woven by their own hands. They shrink away from the mighty tides of life that flow around them. They build a dungeon for their own imprisonment. And thus life becomes insipid. "We can only have

[1] Feuerbach.

the highest happiness," says George Eliot, "such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves."[1] And therefore those who are untouched by the large interests of mankind, who move in a little selfish round of thought and care, who waste their days in frivolity and laborious idleness, find life a poor affair, and hardly worth living. Look around you, and you will see that it is so. Watch those who shrink away from the sorrows and enthusiasms of the great world, who wrap themselves up in their petty cares and mean ambitions. You can see their growing weariness and disgust of life.

But God will not suffer you to endure this self-inflicted torture without attempting a rescue. He is ever seeking to bring men forth into a large place. All His work in and upon the soul has freedom, enlargement, enrichment for its aim. When He brings men forth they emerge upon a wider field, and beneath ampler skies. Abraham in his old home would have been lost to history. God called him to fill a large place in the world. David was drawn from the narrow life of keeping sheep to a career of great duties, great influence, great hopes. Paul, as a Pharisee, would have lived a small life—intense, scrupulous, bigoted. God called him to fill a large place in the kingdom of heaven. Under the spell of Christ, the early Apostles ceased from being poor taxgatherers and fishermen in Galilee. They became the makers of history: men of large visions, large hearts,

[1] "Romola," iii. p. 290.

large services. What is redemption but the bringing forth of man from the dark prison-house of selfishness into the glorious world of the Divine life and love?

There are many young people who think that the Christian life is one of bondage. They fancy that it is less full, less vital, less free than ordinary manhood. And so, without doubt, it has often been misrepresented: a life with all its bright and glowing colours washed out. But that is a caricature. It is only sin that dwarfs and imprisons the soul. True Christian manhood moves in a large, free world. Everything about Christ is big, royal, vital. You have no dream of a large, beautiful, full life that comes up to the divine idea of Manhood and Womanhood. No picture ever painted, no statue ever carved, no poem ever written could convey the idea of life in its splendid fulness and largeness as it is found in that career to which God calls you in His Son.

And therefore I would win you to that life by unfolding, as far as I can, its scope, its freedom, its power to elevate, enrich, expand, beautify existence. I would have you love it, and strive for it, as the crown of manhood, as the realisation of the grandest conception of what life should be.

There are three measurements we may apply to life. It has height, breadth, length. The Ideal Life must be lofty, comprehensive, progressive. A life broad in its human sympathies, but destitute of all growth heavenward, would be imperfect. On the other hand, a life exclusively spiritual would be defective. Human claims

cannot be neglected. We need breadth as well as height: generous large-heartedness as well as spiritual aspiration. And then again height and breadth without length would fail. The work is too great for completion in time. The problems are too vast to find their solution in the present. Man's nature is too great to adjust itself perfectly to this world. The Ideal Life must reach out into eternity. Such was the life of Christ: to such He would introduce us. On the character of Jesus there was no sign of limitation. He was the Divine Type of Humanity: great everyway.

> "Thou seemest human and divine,
> The highest, holiest manhood Thou."

The great reason why life is such a mean and poor affair to thousands is that it is not lofty enough. It has no Height. They live in a world without a sky. There is no upward glance. The world, for them, is without its true counterpart and completion in heaven.[1] There are many people who are full of eager human interests; but in the broadest sense of the word they are worldly-minded. There is no upward movement in their lives. They are without God. They "mind earthly things." Business, society, pleasure, art, science, literature occupy their whole thought. And to such the glory soon fades away out of life. Those who have given up God confess to a sense of utter weariness and despair.

[1] "There is an enlargement of view that is mere breadth without height; it keeps along the level of the earth, grows wise over matter and force, pierces to the centre in its search, weighs and measures all it finds, creeps but never soars, deeming the heights above to be empty."—MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*, p. 50.

A world without a sky is a picture of life without God, and there are those who confess that that is all it can now be for them. All looking up, all reaching out after God, they think a mistake, a mere waste of power. Their solution of the difficulties of modern speculation is to throw up the problem in despair. They have come to the conclusion that no real knowledge of God and spiritual things is attainable. The human mind is afflicted with incurable impotency. It can reach no truth in the sphere of religion. They are Agnostics, and believe that from the very nature of knowledge God cannot be known. Man must make the best of this world. He must substitute "the service of man for the service of God." He must fix his gaze wholly on the earth.

> "It seems God's newer will
> We should not think at all of Him, but turn
> And of the world that He has given us make
> What best we can."

Those who believe profoundly in God, and in the reality of His communion with the human soul, can only regard such persons with the deepest respect and sympathy. God is, no doubt, using all our modern perplexities for some great and wise purpose. They are, at least, forcing this generation to feel, as no other experience could, how poor, and sad, and limited man's life would be without God. Certainly if history bears any clear testimony at all, it is that life would lose its meaning, its glory, its noble significance, had man really to surrender his faith in God. This world would become

a prison-house, and human destiny infinitely sad. "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I," "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," "Tell me, I pray thee, Thy Name," are some of the forms in which man's most passionate and heartfelt desire has found utterance. The history of man is one mighty testimony to his need of God. It is a deep, universal witness to man's conviction that this world is too narrow and too mean without God.

"He brought me forth also into a large place." Christ is the supreme justification of man's nature. "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in Me." His life was infinite in its upward reach: Heaven and God were for Him as real as earth and man. He felt that this world floated, as it were, in the midst of a vaster realm of spiritual being. Nothing is so certain about the life of Jesus as that He lived and died in the fullest conviction that He was in direct communion with God. Agnosticism assumes that He was deluded. Whilst acknowledging Him as one of the greatest spiritual teachers and guides of men, it yet declares that in respect to all that was most vital and central in His life and teaching He was utterly in error. He was a great Religious Genius who mistook His own intuitions and aspirations for a Divine inspiration and guidance. Are you prepared to admit that? If not, then we have the fact before us that the upward glance is not fruitless. The religious element in human life is not a mistake. Jesus, in leading man to a new consciousness of God and spiritual things, has not led him astray. Man's life

does not need to be a poor affair of buying and selling, eating and drinking, of making the best of this world, and of leaving all the deepest desires of the soul unsatisfied, and all its grandest questions unanswered. Christ has brought man forth into a large place. He has enlarged life Upwards, Heavenwards, Godwards. He has made man feel that he is God's child, and that heaven is his home. Do not then leave God out of your life. Keep the path upwards open. In the consciousness of God you will find the enlargement and enrichment of experience.

The largeness of the Ideal Life is seen again in its infinite Breadth; in its large-heartedness as in its spirituality. Christianity is free from all narrowness with respect to this life. There is a grand catholicity in it; its interpretation of God, of the world, of life, of duty is broad and spiritual. It fosters no exclusive type of life or worship. It is broad as the love of God. It awakens a deep sense of fellowship among those who differ in many things. It consecrates and glorifies man's whole existence.

You see this noble breadth in the Truth Christ taught. There is a breadth of mere intellectual indifference and culture against which we must be on our guard. Men who have received a broad and liberal education, who have read and travelled much, generally rise above mere local caste and national prejudices. They learn to consider all questions in various lights, and to make allowances for the points

of view of many observers. That is well. But it often happens that this emancipation of the intellect from the narrowness of caste and custom and creed is accompanied by no firm grasp of vital truths, but by a state of moral and intellectual indifference.

> "I care not what the sects may brawl,
> I sit, as God, holding no form of creed,
> But contemplating all." [1]

Over against this scornful mood I place the freedom of a living faith. It turns away from the elaborate creeds and confessions of the Churches to the deep and yet wonderfully simple truths which Jesus set forth in His life and teaching. There it finds no narrowness but glorious breadth. The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, the sovereign supremacy of Righteousness and Love were the great central facts on which He dwelt. Jesus delighted in no theological subtilties. He placed everything on a living faith, on life, character, conduct. And those who turn to His teaching thank God for the broad, free, generous spirit which it breathes; so unlike the hard, narrow dogmatism found elsewhere.

The breadth of the Ideal Life is seen again in its sympathy with all forms of moral and spiritual excellence. There is a welcome in the kingdom of heaven for a character like Rose Leyburn, as described in "Robert Elsmere," with her passion for music, as well as for her sister Catherine, with her splendid moral strength and spiritual intensity. The perfect life seeks

[1] Tennyson's "Palace of Art."

after fulness and completion in every direction. It is a diamond with innumerable facets receiving and reflecting the light in all directions. It is rich Godward and manward. "God and my own soul" is too narrow a basis. Christianity helps us to recognise all facts: the body as well as the soul; the family and the state as well as the Church. It awakens an interest in all aspects of life: in business, in society, in art, in music, in literature, in all that can strengthen and adorn life. It would form—

> "A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food:
> . . . . . .
> And yet a spirit still, and bright
> With something of angelic light."[1]

And who can fail to recognise the new Enthusiasm for Humanity which Christ has awakened in the world: the passion for the poor, the suffering, the outcast? There is something grand in the spirit of nationality, which makes all who bear one name feel that they are brothers. But Christ brings us forth into a larger place still. He is awakening in the world a broad and generous spirit which feels for all men everywhere, and especially for those most in need of sympathy and service. He is bringing men forth from all that is narrow, selfish, isolated, and filling the world with a new sense of Humanity and Brotherhood.

The largeness of the life which God bestows upon us is seen, last of all, in its infinite Length.

[1] Wordsworth, "She was a phantom of delight."

Every great and true life is a grand argument for Immortality. Unless a malignant demon has made us, and rules our destiny, every noble life must be brought into a larger world, where its progress may be continued, and its growth in knowledge and goodness carried on. I do not understand how any man can truly believe in a good and loving God without also believing in a higher world beyond death, into which we shall pass when we reach the close of our earthly career? Could you believe that God would train us in the knowledge of Himself, that He would awaken in us all generous love and affection for one another, that He would teach us to trust in Him for life and death, and then when the end came suffer us to perish? Could you believe that God would lead a man right on through life up to the moment he enters the Dark Valley, and that then, although he still went on smiling, trusting in God, and saying, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," God would forsake him, and leave him in his last hour, to drop into silence and darkness for ever. I cannot believe it. No! beyond the Dark Valley lies a larger, fairer world, and, as the earthly vision fades, there will rise a glorious region into which, as the soul enters, it will cry with new wonder: "Thou hast brought me forth into a large place."

Is there not something in this thought of the largeness of life able to win and arrest the interest of every thoughtful and earnest person, and more especially those who have much of life still in prospect? "God," says Hegel, in his "Philosophy of History," "wishes

for no narrow-hearted souls or empty heads for His children, but those whose spirits are rich in the knowledge of Him." He wants to lift you into a life in which every element of goodness and beauty combines to make it excellent. Surely you should be fired with an enthusiasm for this large life! There are many who live a life which they know to be unworthy, but to which they so accustom themselves, that, like the prisoner of whom Byron sings, they cling to their dungeon and their chains.

> "My very chains and I grew friends,
> So much a long communion tends
> To make us what we are, even I
> Regained my freedom with a sigh."

Oh! if these words should lead you to feel some momentary glow in view of the large possibilities of life, while yet you feel some lingering regard for the bonds which hold you to an unworthy life, seize, I beseech you, the opportunity and come forth from your prison at Christ's call. Think how much you miss by consenting to take a low and mean view of your nature and destiny. Endeavour to realise how noble and sacred your life may become, and from this hour go forth to follow Christ in that path which widens out into the blessedness of immortality.

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS.

"Two worlds are ours: 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky.

Thou who hast given me eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee
And read Thee everywhere."—KEBLE.

"He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also He hath set eternity in their heart."—ECCLES. iii. 11. (Revised Version.)

"For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—2 COR. iv. 18.

"Thou hast already a portion unshared by the life of the lower creation. Thou hast transcended the seen and temporal; thou hast entered the unseen and eternal; thou hast passed from death unto life."—MATHESON, *Moments on the Mount.*

"There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."
—*The Christian Year.*

III.

TWO WORLDS ARE OURS.

No saying in the Book of Ecclesiastes is more remarkable and suggestive than the one in which the writer declares that God has set eternity in man's heart. "He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also He hath set eternity in their heart." It is a confession that this world is not enough from the lips of one who had obtained a larger share of it than falls to the majority of men. He is speaking, he tells us, out of the depths of a rich and varied experience of life. But he has discovered that, let a man try as he will, he cannot confine his desires within the limits of the temporal and visible. His nature refuses to submit to such restrictions; for within that nature God has placed a consciousness of eternity, of the spiritual, of the divine.

The author of the book freely acknowledges that God has made everything beautiful here. He declares that he has enjoyed the world in fullest measure. He had desired to see life, and he had seen and felt every side of it. He was not a sour fanatic pouring contempt upon what was beyond his reach. "I was," he says, "great more than all that were before me: and what-

soever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, and I withheld not my heart from any joy." He had had it all in his grasp: there was nothing in this world men most long for he had not already possessed. And yet he assures us that there was a void the world could not fill, and that it must be so from the very nature of man. He could not help himself; his inmost being was not adjusted to the temporal. Man feels that he belongs to another sphere which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, but which God reveals to him in the depth of the soul. Everything was made beautiful in its time. There was nothing wrong with the material and visible order of things, so long as it was used in the right way. But man is a spiritual being: he holds relations with the unseen and eternal. He has high instincts which aspire after God and immortality. These cravings he will not surrender; they belong to the deepest part of his being. Let us consider what this sense of eternity in man's heart signifies, and then ask whether it is only an illusion, or whether it can be justified on grounds of reason.

What is eternity? It is that which abides; the real, the substantial, the spiritual, as contrasted with the changing and phenomenal. It belongs as much to the present as to the future; it is here and now, as much as far away and to come. We fall back on the definition of St. Paul: "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

You are within the sphere of the temporal so long

as you are engaged upon whatever is apprehended by the bodily senses. It embraces all nature as consisting of an infinite multitude of objects, bound to one another, and acting on one another by fixed laws. It includes the earth and the sky, and all vast and distant worlds. And all this time-sphere, with all that goes to make up man's life and history as an outward experience: his marrying and giving in marriage; his business and amusements; all the great and all the little activities of his life; all art, law, literature, politics, parliaments, courts; all the pomp and circumstance of life; all that is part and parcel of the movements of this world;—so far as these things stand apart from motive, and character, and inward principle, they belong to the sphere of the temporal and external, the changing and phenomenal. They are the things that are seen.

And in contrast with all this God has given to man the consciousness of spiritual or eternal things.

But observe, God has not done so on the ground that the temporal is unworthy of our love, our reverence, our enthusiastic devotion. "God hath made everything beautiful in its time," and there is a lawful time and place in man's life for the earthly. This visible and outward region is ever growing in interest, and becomes more and more wonderful and splendid as the generations roll on. Let us heartily admit that this present world and this present life grow in beauty and in attractiveness the more you study them, and the more you enter into them in the right spirit.

If you have ever stood on some lofty mountain peak

on a brilliant winter day, and gazed down on snow-clad valleys, from which rose the soft lowing of cattle, and the murmur of distant voices, and delicate wreaths of blue smoke from the shepherd's cot; and on beyond them, on the wide-spreading sea, reflecting the intense sapphire of a cloudless sky, and bearing on its quivering bosom lovely islands that sparkled and shone in their spotless robes, like jewels of the deep, and then on beyond that again, on the jagged peaks of far off mountains, on whose broad naked shoulders winter had cast her softest mantle of white snow;—or if you have ever ascended some mountain torrent, until, far away amid the desolate grandeur of nature, it has tossed and foamed among confused masses of rock, and then hurried on in one white sheet of roaring waters, above which the rainbow hung, like heaven's peace above earth's agitations;—or again, if leaving the sublime and tragic in nature's beauty, you have wandered amid the fresh green hedge-rows of England, and drunk in the sweet scent of roses, and listened to the songs of birds, and watched mighty trees, standing round ancestral homes, like living palaces of beauty, in the rustling of whose leaves you seemed to hear the murmur of a thousand years;—or yet again, if you have ever walked through beech woods in the late autumn, and marked the solemn beauty of those splendid aisles and corridors of form and colour;—if you have ever noticed these fair and ever changing scenes of beauty that nature presents to the thoughtful heart, then you will have appreciated the saying of the wise man, "God hath made every-

thing beautiful in its time;" and although you have had to admit that all this varied magnificence did not belong to the eternal, but to the seen and temporal—that all of it was changing and passing away, yet you would also gladly admit that it was worthy of your profoundest study, your reverence, your wonder, your love.

And then when you turn from nature to the sphere of practical life and experience, do you not feel that, save in exceptional seasons of sorrow and darkness, there is in modern life a wonderful power to arrest, and engage, and stir you? Think of what life must be to a poor savage, struggling for bare existence, and then say if it is not growing in interest as Christianity and civilisation spread.

"Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

There is something profoundly attractive and stimulating in this nineteenth century compared with anything seen in the world before. This great system of things in which you find yourself from day to day, with all its hopes and fears, its ambitions and struggles, its discoveries and activities, which presses in upon you so tightly, but in which you may find your work, your place, in which you may push yourself forward, and win influence, position, honour, and do useful work;—this great system of modern life is full of interest. Let us be honest, and acknowledge that one direct result of Christ's coming into the world is that this present life has immensely risen in value. It has become a statelier,

richer, nobler thing. For man, and pre-eminently for woman, life in Christendom is unspeakably more worth living to-day than it ever was before in any part of the world. This world is not a waste howling wilderness. This present life is not to be treated with disdain. You are not to think it of no consequence how you live here. God wishes that this world should call forth your best energy, that this life should awaken your purest ambitions, and that around these earthly scenes the fairest flowers of human affection should twine.

Well, then, why eternity in the heart? What is the significance of this religious consciousness? Just this: man is a spiritual being. It is the spiritual nature that invests the seen and temporal with deathless interest. Have we not heard the confession again and again, that when once faith in God and immortality has perished, this world has lost its interest, its glory has faded away into the light of common day? Listen to these words of one of the wisest of modern teachers, the late F. D. Maurice: [1] "When heaven was about us, earth looked very lovely; when we came down to earth and believed that we had to do with nothing but that, earth became flat and dull. Its trees, its flowers, its sunlight, lost their charms: they became monotonous, more and more wearisome each day because we could not see beyond them."

Such also was the confession of the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes. He tried to find out what the seen and temporal were worth, apart from the eternal.

[1] F. D. Maurice, "The Epistles of John," p. 124.

He began with rank and riches, he acquired wisdom and knowledge: as he went along he left no stone unturned in his search for happiness and satisfaction, and yet his exclamation was: "All is vanity and a striving after wind." Everywhere you find it so. Those who have given themselves up exclusively to the worship of the visible and temporal have given us the profoundest and saddest confessions that it could not satisfy. There has been a deep longing for something beyond, which God and immortality could alone explain. Those who have been most successful in divesting themselves of belief in God and eternal things, and who have endeavoured to find a substitute in a greater devotion to the present life, have almost universally confessed to the unspeakable weariness of life, and their sense of failure. When they have quenched, stifled, corrupted these deeper feelings, they have found no finality in their aims; they have acknowledged their hopes were better than their realisations, their prospects higher than their attainments—that a hunger was left in the soul which nothing could satisfy.

What is the meaning of all this? Simply that man's nature is not adjusted to the limits of the seen and temporal, and it is therefore impossible for man to find satisfaction therein. God has set eternity in man's heart; He has made us for Himself that we might find rest only in Him. We cannot do without God and immortality. This world, however good and fair when wisely loved, will seem but dust and ashes when the light of the eternal is quenched. Man

cannot shake off the instinct of eternity, and the conviction of its reality. If nothing else is possible, he will try and make for himself some poor imitation of it. The late Bishop of Durham refers, in one of his sermons, to an incident in the career of Napoleon which illustrates this. It is said that that great conqueror was asked to suggest the subject for a historical picture that would perpetuate his name, and he asked how long the picture would last. He was told that under favourable conditions it might last five hundred years. But that would not satisfy him; he craved for a more enduring memorial. It was suggested that the sculptor might take the place of the painter, and his genius might come nearer to conferring immortality. Now what was the meaning of that ambitious craving? It was a perverted instinct; it was a solemn and impressive testimony to the fact that God has set eternity in man's heart. That demand for earthly immortality was but the echo—the hollow, mocking echo—of the voice of eternity in the great conqueror's soul. Man feels that he was not made for the seen and temporal, however grand it may be. He is conscious that he is made for God, and destined to share in God's life. Materialists may tell him that it is all a mistake, but he refuses to believe them; and the reason is that amid all the storm of earthly passion and distraction, he hears in softest whispers a voice from the depths within his own soul, bearing witness to eternity.

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just." [1]

But now the question arises: Is this religious consciousness an illusion? Is there any reality corresponding to the feeling? We know that man makes many mistakes when he surrenders himself to the guidance of inward impressions. He has had many hopes, aspirations, beliefs which experience has not justified. Outward realities do not always agree with subjective sensations. Why may not this conviction of the reality of an eternal state be a deception, a Will-o'-the-wisp alluring man from the path of tried experience into the bogs and waste-places of superstition? No one disputes that men are everywhere haunted by this feeling of eternity. This groping after God lest, if haply, He may be found, is characteristic of every age. The longing for immortality is almost as universal as man. It is a question whether any race exists, however degraded, which is absolutely destitute of some rudimentary form of religion. But could such a race be discovered it would really prove nothing. It is beyond dispute that wherever the human intelligence has been developed, the belief has arisen that there is a higher and deeper reality beyond and within the visible and phenomenal.

But many say to-day: We admit the existence of the sentiment, but we think it an illusion. In some

[1] Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

respects it has hitherto been a beneficial illusion—it has helped men to struggle on; but in other respects it has been hurtful—it has led men astray. It has induced them to fix their thoughts and interests on an unseen world, instead of making the best of this. In any case, it is an illusion, a mistake, an error of feeling which the mature intelligence must surrender. There is no reality corresponding to it. Here is this form of modern doubt, expressed with great beauty and subtilty in a sonnet by Eugene Lee-Hamilton called "Sea-Shell Murmurs":—

> "The hollow sea-shell which for years hath stood
> On dusty shelves, when held against the ear
> Proclaims its stormy parent; and we hear
> The faint far murmur of the breaking flood.
> We hear the sea. The sea? It is the blood
> In our own veins, impetuous and near,
> And pulses keeping pace with hope and fear,
> And with our feelings' ever-shifting mood.
>
> Lo! in my heart I hear, as in a shell,
> The murmur of a world beyond the grave,
> Distinct, distinct, though faint and far it be.
> Thou fool! this echo is a cheat as well,—
> The hum of earthly instincts: and we crave
> A world unreal as the shell-heard sea."

The scepticism in that poem is expressed with much attractiveness and plausibility, but all the same it casts suspicion on all the deepest instincts of our nature. For if man's religious consciousness is an illusion, how are we to account for it? It presents itself as an anomaly, an inexplicable mystery. It is impossible to explain how it originated. If it is

playing us false there is no other deception like it in nature. For in all other cases we find that universal instincts bear witness to reality. Our various organs and desires are adapted to their environment. What is within us is in harmony with what is without us. There is a provision in nature for all our universal wants. The eye is made for light, and there is the sun to give the light. On no principle of evolution could there have been the organ or faculty had the corresponding environment not existed. Nature does not give us faculties without providing for them. There is perfect correspondence between the life within and the provision without.

But then all serious thinkers admit the existence of the religious consciousness in man. No one now seeks to prove that man is, at least, a religious animal. That is admitted. Everywhere and in every age you find men groping after the eternal, the infinite, the divine. Religion may be an illusion, but we must admit that it is a positive factor in human life.

But, then, assuming it to be an illusion, how are you to account for it? How did it arise? Why did it become universal? Is there any other example of a universal instinct to which no reality corresponds? Is there not something essentially absurd in supposing that not one man, or one nation, or one age has been led astray; but that practically all men, all ages, all nations—the whole human race, have fallen hopelessly into error, and become the victims of a gigantic mistake? Is it possible to explain on any scientific prin-

ciples how human nature could be so constituted that, on the one deepest question of all, the thing most worth knowing, it has gone utterly astray everywhere and always. There is a moral impressiveness in the thought that man could not be so constituted that he could not help going wrong on the greatest of all questions all the world over. It would make life such an awful riddle and mockery. Man himself would be the anomaly of anomalies; his life would be nothing but contradictions; it would be a lie from end to end.

"God hath made everything beautiful in its time; also He hath set eternity in their heart." "Two worlds are ours;" the seen and the unseen, the temporal and eternal. And he lives most nobly and most truly who lives in both; who realises, indeed, that the light and glory of the eternal sphere so fall on the interests of time, that they are seen in their true worth, and are enriched with new meanings. To him, indeed, the two worlds have become one; the earthly lifted up into the divine, the spiritual penetrating and glorifying the whole. But then our danger lies in forgetting and denying the existence of the higher world, because it does not thrust itself upon us with the same rude urgency as the interests of time. The witness to it lies deep buried in the heart, and often we are hardly conscious of its presence. In olden times when there were no books, and parchments were scarce and expensive, it was not an unusual thing, particularly in the Middle Ages, to erase the writing, and to use the same

parchment over again. But the ingenuity of these old monks in erasing the writing has been exceeded by modern men in reviving it again, so that many ancient writings of great value have been recovered. And so the witness to the eternal world has been written deeply on man's soul by the finger of God, and no man can wholly erase it. He often does cover it up; but the old lines come to the surface again and take him by surprise. Many hard lines and black blots have been scattered over the divine writing, and for months or years it may have been forgotten; but He who first put the witness there does not leave man to his own sinful perversity. He comes to us in many ways, and by a divine process, for which we may well give Him thanks, He causes the hidden and obliterated writing to appear again, if not with its former distinctness, yet with a certainty which assures us, beyond a doubt, that it is a divine witness in the soul to its High Origin and its Immortal Destiny.

"Two worlds are ours: 'tis only sin
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky."

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SPIRIT.

"All are Architects of Fate,
Working in these walls of Time :
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme."

—LONGFELLOW.

"'See,' saith He, 'that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.'"—HEB. viii. 5.

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—1 COR. iii. 11.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."—Ps. cxxvii. 1.

"Not what I am or find myself to be by nature, nor what I am made to be by any foreign or external power, constitutes my spiritual life, but that which, by conscious activity and will, I make myself to be."—Dr. CAIRD, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 259.

"For the structure that we raise,
Time is with materials filled:
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build."
—LONGFELLOW, *The Builders.*

IV.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SPIRIT.

Every man, it is said, is the architect of his own fortunes; but it is a nobler and truer thing to say that every man is the architect of his own character and destiny. Every man is every day building his house of life, constructing a temple in which he may worship, a palace in which he may abide for ever, or a prison in which he will find himself finally doomed and chained.

For what are settled and permanent forms of feeling, thinking, and action? What are fixed habits and principles of life, but the soul's true dwelling-place, the sphere of its presence and influence, the centre from which it goes forth to impress itself on the world? They constitute character, and character is not given to us ready made, but is created by that original, self-determining power—that central core of being, which is our own very selves. "Nothing," says a philosopher, "takes place morally, except what takes place through our own self-determination."[1]

Circumstances do not create character. Out of exactly the same conditions the soul can make itself

[1] Rothe.

fit for the angels, or for the spirits of darkness. What kills one man may carry life to another. The solicitation to evil which led Macbeth to ruin drove Banquo to increased watchfulness and prayer. Man is not a creature of circumstances; what they do for him depends on himself. They develop character; they do not create it. The architect is within. Silently, ceaselessly the soul takes hold of the elements it finds without, wrestles with them, opposes them, weaves them into a consistent pattern, builds up its own structure by means of them; but what is built depends on its own choice and selection. Out of the same elements one will build a temple, and another a palace, and another a prison. Out of the same quarry the materials are brought; but what is done with them depends upon the builders.

Every man, then, is the Architect and Builder of his own character.

This is essential to our idea of man as a spiritual being. It is this power of self-determination that distinguishes man from all merely natural objects. A stone or any other inorganic substance has a nature wholly given to it. It is just what it is through the action of forces outside itself. Strictly speaking, there is no self. But a step higher in the scale of existence we see beings which are not wholly formed from without. The tree or animal has a life of its own which seizes upon the materials without, and makes them contribute to its own development. But when we ascend a step higher, and reach man, we find this still

more true. Man is not a mere passive creature to be shaped unconsciously by either nature or God. He himself is the architect and builder: on himself depends the formation of character. He has the control of his own destiny.

This is the mark of man's greatness. In this consists the awful seriousness of life. It cuts man off distinctly from the lower creatures. Their self-development is an unconscious activity. Nature in them wills an end of which they know nothing. Hence in them there is no inward strife; no sense of bondage to appetite and desire. They are not haunted by the presence of ideals of what they should be but are not. The bitterness, the regret, the remorse of failure are unknown to them.

But man is constituted otherwise. He is a self-conscious being, who unites within the circle of his one self all the appetites and impulses of the animal, and all the aspirations and capacities of a spiritual nature. In his deepest self he is a rational and moral being, but he has to build up his character and destiny by entering into victorious conflict with the flesh, and so subduing and transforming its instincts, that they shall not be destroyed, but become the instruments and aids of his higher life. It is in virtue of his double nature that his life is one of perpetual struggle and unrest until he has achieved his own emancipation. He is conscious that he ought not to live in slavish obedience to impulse and passion. He longs to build up and realise his ideal of a true life.

As already suggested, the materials for this house of life, this holy temple for the Lord God to dwell in, consist of the natural endowments, faculties, desires, and the opportunities and experiences which time brings. Character has been defined as resultant of will acting upon circumstances. Circumstances are the gold and silver and precious stones, and wood and iron, out of which the soul is to construct its edifice. Nature, time, and experience provide us with the varied materials for our work, but the form and quality of the building depend on ourselves.

We see an analogy in the realm of nature. You take the seed of some beautiful flower, and plant it in the soil. In its growth and development you witness the unfolding of a living principle. It is not independent of its surroundings, but it can take them up, and build them into its own structure. That young flower has an inner law and life of its own, and in virtue of these it absorbs and transforms the dead matter around itself, and quickens it with its own life. It takes up the materials it finds in the soil and the atmosphere and the sunshine, and turns them all into means and elements of its own self-development. Out of these common materials it builds up silently a house of life until it has reared itself up into a living and fragrant temple of beauty. And, at last, the lovely flower stands as the dwelling-place and shrine of that invisible, vital principle that built it up out of the soil and air and moisture.

The philosopher Fichte has said: "Wouldest thou

attain unto thy highest, go and look upon a flower; what it does without a will, that do thou willingly." We cannot shape our moral life as the seed forms for itself a body; for we must work with freedom and intelligence. But what the flower does by the necessity of its being we are to do consciously and freely. We are spiritual beings in the midst of earthly conditions and elements, as the seed is a living principle in the soil. Christ is the root principle of every true life. He is the source of all spiritual vitality. We start truly when we start from Him. But being rooted and grounded in Him, we shall find in all things around us the elements by which the Divine life may be built up into a Divine structure.

Christ is the Sure Foundation; we build with security when we build on Him. But, then, the responsibility rests with us. We are the architects. God has placed within our reach various materials for our work; some are coarse and common, some of rare beauty and excellence. We have the wood and stone and clay, as well as the gold and silver and precious stones, and out of these we are to raise our house of life. By daily self-crucifixion, by the struggle of reason and conscience with passion and appetite, by trials of our patience, our faith, our uprightness, by the outward buffetings of temptation, and by all the changeful experiences of sorrow and of joy, we are carrying on our work. Slowly but surely the moral fabric is rising. Gradually round the soul spiritual walls and pillars and columns are

being built; pathways of moral habit are being constructed, and, at last, the top stone will be placed in its position, the finishing touches will be added, and there it will stand a holy Christlike character, a home for the soul, a living temple for the Lord God.

Well, then, bear in mind that you cannot help being a builder of some sort. For honour or dishonour you must raise your edifice. You are forced by the very conditions of life to act, to judge, to choose; and every action, every judgment, every choice strengthens a bent, deepens a groove, determines an aspect of the character. There is no escape from it: it is inevitable. As ceaselessly as the heart beats, the work of character-building is going on; silently, constantly you are giving yourself shape. Day by day your ever-recurring actions and thoughts are hardening into adamantine walls and pillars of outward habits and inward convictions. Your light fancies and sentiments are crystallising into shapes of beauty or deformity; and as your life goes on, there is being raised by you either a holy and beautiful temple, in which you may meet with God, and live glad and free, or else a house of bondage, a loathsome prison-house, amid whose foulness and darkness you will be chained. The work of character-building must go on.

Man, then, is called to build his temple or house of life. But to do so he requires not only materials, but a Plan. He needs an Ideal. What is the true idea of manhood? Where shall we find the Perfect Pattern of how we are to build?

A little reflection will show that this request for a Perfect Ideal for all human builders is really the most tremendous demand that could be made. It would almost seem as though it could not be granted. Think what it implies. If one man were just like another, as castings from the same mould are like one another, if human nature were the same invariable quality everywhere, then the conception of One pattern for all men would be free from mystery. But we know that human nature is infinitely varied. God does not intend that we shall build alike. He does not desire to see His human children all exact duplicates of each other. Human nature is constantly changing, unfolding new aspects, revealing new possibilities. The same fundamental qualities may be in all, but they are combined in infinite variety. Each life should be a fresh, new existence; we should build up the spiritual character so that each man's work may become an originality, a new beauty, with nothing else exactly like it in the universe.

Think, then, of One single life thoroughly human, and yet so infinitely perfect and manifold and complete, that no builder could exhaust it, and yet every builder find in that life all he needs for a Perfect Ideal of his own life. What a wonderful life that would have to be. To that life men would go with all that is peculiar to the masculine nature, and would find in it a pattern for perfect manhood. To that life women would go with all that is special to the feminine nature, and would find ideal womanhood pictured there. The

Hebrew would go, the Roman, the Greek, the Briton, the Chinese, the Negro, and each would find in that life all he required to guide him in the building up of his own life, and yet none would exhaust it.

Is there anywhere such a life as that? Yes! there is One who is universally admitted to be the Absolute Ideal. There is such a Divine perfection and fulness in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ that He has already become to the world of spiritual builders an inexhaustible and all-sufficient Example. There is such a richness and manifoldness in His life that every one seeking moral guidance and inspiration may go to Him and find all he needs. He is the perfect picture of what God intends His children to become.

Is not this one of the greatest facts in human experience? one of the incontrovertible facts to which we may appeal? Men and women of every nationality, of every description of temperament and experience and difficulty, have been going to Him in countless numbers during the last eighteen hundred years, and they have all found in Him the adequate pattern of their lives. All who have gone to Him have said: "We fall short of our Ideal: we do not come up to the Pattern; but we have learned from Him how we ought to build."

And our Lord Jesus Christ is able to satisfy all human needs in this universal way, I think, for these, among many other, reasons. Firstly: Every one going to the study of Christ's life has been able to recognise in Him the Divine Pattern he needed. Each person

has felt that Christ has revealed a truly Human Ideal to him, something to which his own heart responded, and which his own heart was crying out after. Secondly, he has also felt that Christ enlarged and completed his ideal of what he ought to be. The Divine Ideal exposed the flaws and faults and defects of his own notions. Thirdly, that do what he would the Divine Pattern transcended all his achievements. He could never bring his work up to the Ideal. And yet, fourthly, he has been persuaded that there was nothing in Christ which it was not his duty and his privilege to aspire after.

Now let us try to sum up the great duty of life as it should present itself to a Modern Disciple. It is to build up the character after the Divine Ideal God has given men in Christ Jesus. How may that be done? I will answer by an incident taken from a biography of Frederick Robertson, the celebrated minister. The author tells us that in the course of his inquiries among those who knew that great man, he called upon a small tradesman, who took him into his inner room, and showed him a portrait of the preacher. "There," said the man, "whenever I am tempted to do anything that is not fair or right I step in and look at that picture, and the memory of his words and looks makes me scorn every mean thing for his sake." That incident exactly illustrates how Christ saves men, how His character moulds and fashions our lives. That is the simple and exquisite method by which we may build after the Divine Ideal. We rise in the scale

of moral and spiritual worth as we come under the inspiration of a nature higher than our own. We cannot help becoming like those with whom we associate, and whom we admire and love. Would you build up your life after the Perfect Example? Then make Christ your constant companion. A brief space every day spent in communion with Jesus Christ, in seriously endeavouring to understand His life and teaching, in earnestly asking Him to help you to follow it, will work a mighty effect upon your character. Your life will be shaped under the spell of the holy character of Jesus.

Do you say: I should like to begin this great work? I desire to shape my life after the example of Jesus? Then I would say to you: Begin at once; begin to-day; begin this very hour. Put yourself under the influence and spell of Christ's life. Begin by reading about Him, and by asking Him, at once, to aid you in all your struggles with doubt and sin. To do this sincerely and earnestly is to become His disciple, is to become a Christian.

This, then, is the work to which the Modern Disciple is consecrated. Whatever doubts may torment him regarding other matters, none invade this region. The life to which our Divine Master calls us, and which He set forth in absolute perfection in His own life, is large, full, beautiful; most human, and yet most spiritual. It expands Godwards and Manwards; it casts no cold or averted look upon the ties and claims of this world, and yet it finds the true source of its

strength and joy in the eternal and unseen. Such is the ideal of the Christian life which I have, so far, endeavoured to place before you. I believe it accords with the mind of Christ. I believe that it is in harmony with all that is most noble in this nineteenth century.

Will you not enter on this life forthwith, if you have not already done so? "Do not fancy you can never become a Christian because there is much generally identified with Christianity which you know you can never believe. . . . The question you have to answer is not, Can you accept the Christianity of the Church? or, Do you believe in this or that doctrine? Not at all. The question is, Do you believe in Christ as able to bring you into fellowship with God? Is there something in Christ which appeals to you, which makes you feel that that is life as it ought to be? Is there something in Him which gives you hope, and points towards God and eternity? If so, begin where you are, and with what knowledge and belief you have."[1]

Oh! will you not enter on this great duty? There is no work so honourable, no other work so important, no other work whose issues are so vast and momentous. Do not neglect it. Do not think lightly of it. Be a wise master builder, and build on the one sure and secure Foundation, even Jesus Christ. Build, also, in humble and reverent dependence on the help of God, on the help of the Holy Ghost. Daily, hourly, ask the great Father in Heaven to guide your hand and strengthen your heart, and fill you with all wisdom

[1] Dr. Marcus Dods, "What is a Christian?"

and understanding. Build in this spirit, and then your house of life will be both a palace and a temple—a palace of the heart's delight, and a house of prayer. Year after year it will rise into fairer proportions, until the light of eternity will flood it with celestial glory, and it will stand on the Eternal Rock, secure for ever from all ruin and decay. Build in this way, and then the storms may beat upon your work, and the floods may surge around it, but above all the beating of the tempest it will grandly rise, and, at last, the storm will hush down to a calm, and the roaring of the winds and the dashing of the billows will give place to the fair, grand, bright morning of eternity, when the Sun of Righteousness will arise for ever upon you, and throw His beams upon your work, and there amid the bliss and splendour of the kingdom of glory it will stand secure from all assault, reflecting through all eternity the glory of the Lord.

Fundamental Beliefs.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And Thou hast made him: Thou art just."

"Behold, all souls are Mine."—EZEK. xviii. 4.

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."—GEN. ii. 7.

"The least and lowest fact of outward observation is not an independent entity—fact minus mind; and out of which mind may, somehow or other, be seen to emerge; but it is fact or object as it appears to an observing mind, in the medium of thought, having mind or thought as an inseparable factor of it."

"What the phrase 'necessity of religion' implies is, that in the nature of man, as an intelligent, self-conscious being, there is that which forces him to rise above what is material and finite, and to find rest nowhere short of an Infinite, all-comprehending Mind."

—Dr. CAIRD, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion.*

"This, then, is the alternative which confronts us: God must be our deliverer, or the end inevitably is nothingness."—Professor T. G. BONNEY, D.Sc., *Christian Doctrines and Modern Thought.*

"My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is."

V.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

Ezekiel, like all true prophets of the Lord, passionately asserted the reality of an Eternal Providence, and attempted to justify the ways of God to his fellow-countrymen. He set himself especially to meet their complaint that God's ways were not equal. "The fathers," they said, "have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The fathers did the wrong, and the children had to suffer. The moral order under which they lived was unjust. Such an objection could not be passed over in silence. God and His ways must be justified to the nation's conscience and reason, or the people would speedily sink into infidelity.

But, then, these children of Israel submitted a profound problem. They stated a most perplexing fact; one which has, often enough, made it hard to believe in the Divine Righteousness and Love. Many of our most difficult questions arise out of that undoubted community of life and interest, which extends from generation to generation, and involves men, not only in one another's sufferings, but in one another's sins. The Prophet was not able to give a complete answer to that problem. The answer is not perfectly clear

yet, although many questions become less perplexing when we get away from the crude individualistic philosophy of the last century, and bring the light of the central facts and ideas of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to bear upon the conception of the Corporate Unity of Humanity, a conception which is now influencing modern life in all directions.

But what Ezekiel does is to assert in God's name, and with great pathos and passion, another truth. He simply assures them that all souls belong to God. No law of heredity, no facts of birth, no wrongs done to the fathers, could stand in competition with that glorious affirmation. As the Lord, Creator, Father of every soul, God would take care that no one should finally suffer injustice. He would see that every one received fair treatment. How that was to be accomplished the Prophet did not fully understand. How the evil entail was to be cut off, and how the child was to be delivered from the dark fate in which the wrong-doing of others had involved it, was not perfectly clear to him. But he was sure that in the end God's ways would be found equal. No one would lose the race, or be everlastingly defeated in the battle, because others had been guilty. Every one would receive fair and just and merciful treatment. No one could finally become the victim of a dark fate, or of some terrible law of nature. Ezekiel saw God, as it were, standing over every man and saying: "Behold, all souls are Mine; and I will protect the interests of each one, and watch over each one, and neither man nor nature

shall ruin the souls that belong to Me. No one in the end shall be able to say that he has not had a fair chance."

I think you must feel that if we could only heartily accept the teaching of this old prophet we should find in it a great gospel—a gospel meeting our needs in this nineteenth century as fully as it met the perplexities of the age in which the prophet spoke. For we have here the answer which one who sincerely accepted the highest modern spiritual philosophy of life would give to two great questions men are asking now, viz.: "What is the relation of man to nature?" and "What is the relation of God to those who seem the victims of a dark and cruel fate?" The teaching of the prophet is utterly opposed to the doctrine of the scientific materialist, who denies man's spiritual nature, and declares that he is merely the most perfectly organised animal. The position of Ezekiel implies that man is essentially a soul, a spiritual being, whose life unfolds and realises itself in a bodily organism, but who belongs to a spiritual order, and is not involved in the fate of nature. Nothing less than this, we see, can be drawn from the prophet's words. The assurance that all souls belong to God would have absolutely no meaning if men were simply a part of nature, and wholly involved in its fate. On the contrary, the teaching here is that although man lives in this world, he cannot be altogether summed up under its laws. His destiny is not finally determined by them. He belongs to a spiritual

order: he belongs to God. And therefore we have here a spiritual philosophy of life. And then out of that springs a glorious hope for all who suffer beneath a burden of hereditary evil and misery. We will consider this spiritual philosophy in this chapter, and reserve the question of heredity for the next.

There is, then, a great gospel in Ezekiel's message in view of the growing tendency to identify man wholly with nature, and involve him in its fate. The greatest battle of modern times arises from the attack which is made on the moral and religious consciousness of man by those who would push the methods and principles of physical science beyond their legitimate province. The fight rages round this question: "Can Nature say to man, 'You belong to me; I produced you; you are wholly my work, and when I have done with you I will destroy you;' or has man the right to say, 'No, I do not belong to Nature; I belong to God, I belong to a spiritual order, I am free, and immortal'?" Into that conflict every human interest will be drawn before it is over, and on how it is decided all the higher hopes and prospects of mankind will depend.

Perhaps it may seem to you the height of intellectual perversity and folly to raise this question. It is your happiness to enjoy a moral and spiritual life so rich and full that God and your own soul seem to you the supreme, almost the only realities. To call in question the reality of this higher life seems to you like one who disputes the presence of the light when the sun is shining with the utmost brilliancy. The difficulties

men raise have on you no influence at all. It is, however, important that you should at least see that it is through no perversity of intellect, or mere love of unbelief, that these questions are raised. They are the necessary and inevitable outcome of the success of those principles which, when applied in other directions, have borne much fruit. I will endeavour to make this clear.

For ages man had been like a person dwelling in a splendid palace, with all the doors leading to its chief apartments shut and locked against him. Nature was a closed secret, a marvel which he could not penetrate. He went round trying the doors, listening and knocking for admission, but found none. He looked through every chink and keyhole to catch some glimpse of the wonder and glory within, and did in that way discover many things. At last he found the key which would unlock these doors and disclose the treasures. By means of the methods and principles of modern science he has been exploring the "things kept secret from the foundation of the world." He has unlocked the heavens, and their vast and illimitable splendours have dazzled his upward gaze. He has opened the mighty records of the rocks, and has read from the ancient books of stone the story of an almost infinite past. He has discovered secret forces well-nigh powerful enough to wreck a world, but willing to be bound and chained, and devoted to his service. He has gone into the mysteries of life and growth, and has, apparently, grasped the grandest laws of vital action, so that he can trace the conditions of health, the

causes of disease, and apply his knowledge in an almost infinite variety of ways to human happiness and progress. And especially has he been able to bring this new key of knowledge to the laying bare of his own nature. He has shown how closely man is connected with the whole system of things; how each generation is affected by those which have preceded it; how intimately our thinking powers are entwined with the body, so that the slightest disease in the tissue of the brain will throw into disorder and darkness the whole moral and intellectual life. In this way science has been opening the closed doors, and exploring the unknown treasures.

Well, now, principles which have proved successful in opening up so many regions would be sure to be pushed to their furthest limits. If a man possessed a key which had opened ninety-nine doors, he would be sure to try it on the hundredth, within which was the final secret. It was simply inevitable that the question would arise, "What is there within man which our methods and principles cannot fully explain? So long as we are dealing with the material world, we find no reason to doubt their applicability; why should we hesitate to apply them to the solution of questions as to the spiritual world—questions as to the nature of the soul, the mode of its presence in the world, and the way in which it acts and is acted upon by other beings and things? When, however, we attempt thus to extend them, when we try to apply to this new region the principles which have led to such successes in mathematics and physics, we are at once

brought into collision with some of the most deeply-rooted convictions of man in regard to the spiritual world—we are even led to doubt the very existence of such a world." [1]

For example, this marvellous advance of knowledge of which I have just spoken, has been made through the application of the principle to nature which we often hear described as "the universal reign of law," the principle of external necessity or physical causation. But that principle, if applied to man, is fatal to the ideas which lie at the root of all morality and religion. It teaches that all things are so bound together that everything is what it is, and acts as it does, because of the way other things act on it. If this be true of man then he is simply a link in a chain. He is the necessary result of causes that were working before he came, and which will continue to work when he has passed away. No action is properly his own. His thoughts, habits, feelings spring from the past, or his present surroundings. He has nothing he can truly call his own. His very individuality is largely an illusion. The path he takes in life is fixed absolutely, although he cannot trace all the causes. He goes in the direction he is sent like a ball shot from a cannon. The materialist would, of course, admit that we fancy we are free. Nothing is more certain than that. We have an irresistible impression that we can choose whether to do this or that. We cannot avoid feeling that it would be right for us to do this thing, wrong to

[1] Caird, "The Critical Philosophy of Kant," vol. i. p. 26.

do that; and that we can determine for ourselves which we will do. But this must be set down as an illusion. If man is to be explained by the principle which, when applied to nature, has achieved such immense success, then morality must go; for it rests on the ideas of personal freedom and responsibility. If man is a mere link in a chain, then the voice of conscience deceives.

In the same way these principles applied to man would involve the destruction of religion; for religion assumes that man is a free being, who can lift himself out of the network of finite things, and put himself into communion with an Absolute and Infinite Mind.

And as religion and morality disappear, so do the soul and its future existence; for science can take notice of only those objects that exist under the conditions of space and time, which can be weighed and measured, which can be made the objects of experiment, and observation, and analysis. But the soul is not such an object; it cannot be put under the microscope; it cannot be tested and examined in the chemical or physical laboratory. Again, the fundamental conception of the biologist is, that every organ has its functions; and just as it is the function of the lungs to breathe, of the stomach to digest food, of the heart to circulate the blood, so it is the function of the brain to think, to will, to feel; and just as when any of these organs are destroyed or injured their powers perish, so when the brain is injured or destroyed the power to think, and will, and feel perishes also, and when death comes the whole man ceases to be. When

the body dies, the man, as a thinking, willing, loving worshipping individual, absolutely collapses, and comes to an end and perishes for ever.

You have seen a child blowing bubbles, and have watched the spheres of film expand and grow, and then for a moment or two detach themselves into separate existences, and, wafted gently by the breeze, float away iridescent with beautiful colours; and then the next moment collapse, and their separate existence was over for ever. So those who would apply the principles of physical science to the explanation of man's whole nature, can only look upon our personal life as but the lifting of certain material particles and forces from the great ocean of being, only in a little while to sink back from whence they came, lost, utterly lost for ever more. And not only so. We only complete the picture by reminding ourselves that these forces which are now working in nature, and which make the living universe what it is, are gradually becoming dissipated; the sun is losing its heat, and in the course of ages the period will come when all will grow cold and dark. All life will have perished in the solar system; there will be nothing but a universe in ruins. The human race, with all its culture, and history, and civilisations and achievements, and each individual man with all his hopes and fears, his love of his brother, and love of God, will be buried in everlasting oblivion, and nothing will remain to show that there had ever been this world of life and beauty but one huge, awful tomb-world swinging in eternal silence through the

infinite darkness, without even one lonely voice left to bewail the tragic story of man's fate, and the vanity and nothingness of his life.

I think that you will now be prepared to admit that this battle is a vital one; that the conflict between those who believe that man belongs to God, that he is essentially a spiritual being with an immortal destiny, and those who declare that he is only one of the objects of nature and must perish with them, is one in which all human interests and hopes are involved.

But yet the scientist might very well reply: Granted that my principles lead to the denial of man's spiritual nature, and to the destruction of religion, and to the uprooting of all those old convictions regarding human responsibility and freedom. I cannot help that. That is not my business. My duty is to seek after truth, irrespective of consequences.

How then are we to repel this attack? Simply by proving that the principles of science are not, and from their nature cannot be, *universal* principles. By bringing forward a *higher* principle, which will at once justify the methods and principles of science within their own proper sphere, and show how they are and must be valid there, and yet which absolutely limits their application to that sphere. Now to do this adequately would be to go over and state a whole system of philosophy, which is, of course, impossible here. And yet, perhaps, a sentence or two may help you to see what I mean.

At first sight it might not seem unreasonable to think

that the world would exist just as we see and know it even if all minds were absent. Would not the mountains and plains, the sky and sea, and all forms and colours, and sounds and odours, and all sweet and bitter things be there just as we now know them, even if man was not here? And yet a moment's consideration will show that such an idea is a fallacy. For what are light and darkness, cold and heat, colours and odours, things sweet and bitter apart from our *sensitive* organism and intelligence? They sink back, at once, into a mere system of mechanical attractions and repulsions. And so it can be shown that all such ideas as time and space, force and law, involve a relation to a conscious intelligence. But to follow out these suggestions would lead us further than we can go now. The truth is, that the scientist never reaches the soul in all his investigations because he starts with it, and carries it with him every step of the way.[1] "That which observes can

[1] The reply to the Scientific Materialist given in this chapter is based on the position that he can give no intelligible account of experience without tacitly assuming the presence and activity of that spiritual principle whose existence he denies. He attempts, as we have seen, to explain mind as a mode of matter, and its activity as a function of matter. But if you leave out of account the intelligence as a unifying, distinguishing, co-ordinating, self-conscious principle, experience becomes impossible. For the most elementary form in which we can conceive it involves a relation between a self-conscious subject, and an object which it distinguishes from itself. The lowest form in which it can emerge is when it can be said: "I feel something." It is related feeling. But take away the "I," the "Ego," and although there might be change there would be no experience. For in its lowest and simplest form experience is a *consciousness* of change. But this cannot exist without a permanent, self-conscious principle that abides amid the change,

never, strictly speaking, observe itself. It is itself the organ of vision; and the eye cannot see its own power of seeing. This is why natural science, which is an organised system of observation, finds that its own observing mind is absolutely and totally outside its ken. . . . The observing mind that turns round to explore itself, carries itself round as it turns. It can never say: Let me look at myself, as if I were a phenomenon, as a fact presented to my own consciousness, for it itself would be engaged in the fact of looking; it itself is the consciousness to which it proposes to present itself." [1]

These few sentences are all that can be devoted to the philosophical answer to materialism. We have no quarrel with science within its own sphere. We honour the scientific worker, and accept all his verified conclusions without misgiving. But in the interest of science no less than of humanity, we protest against the application of its principles where from the very nature of the case they are inapplicable.

And now, having turned aside the attack on man's spiritual nature and hopes, I want you to come back to these words of the prophet Ezekiel and notice what a blessed gospel there is in them for all who can accept them as a message from God. "Behold," says God, "all

which can identify, compare, relate the changes, and co-ordinate them into a system of knowledge. In a word, there must be present the thinking, spiritual self, the conscious Ego, in order to make possible that outward order of things with which the scientist starts, and from which he thinks intelligence could be evolved.

[1] "Lux Mundi," p. 9.

souls are Mine." "You do not belong to nature; you belong to Me. You will not perish with nature; because I live ye shall live also." Christ's gospel, taking up the spirit of these ancient words, assures us that we are the children of God, and that it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but that we shall never perish, and that no evil power shall pluck us from our Heavenly Father's hand. It makes a great practical difference which side you take in this conflict. Say that man is merely the highest animal, and like the rest involved in the fate of nature, and then the glory fades out of life, and the future is nothing but midnight darkness. But believe in God and in the soul's essential relation to Him, and then in the supreme and last dread crisis of life here, we shall be able to turn and say: Nature! I defy you. You slay my body by your laws, but you cannot slay me. I do not belong to you, but to God. And Nature, when your end comes, and you grow old and grey, and the heavens pass away with a loud noise, and the weary earth, so long the scene of man's joy and sorrow, so often drenched with his tears and blood, shall pass away and fall like a ruined home, whose tenants have fled, then we who rest in the promise of our God will survive the shock of all material things, and will look for a new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

> "The darkening universe defy
> To quench our Immortality,
> Or shake our Trust in God."

"Behold, all souls are Mine."

THE GOSPEL AND HEREDITY.

"For whom the heart of man shuts out,
Straightway the heart of God takes in,
And fences them all round about
With silence 'mid the world's loud din."

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. . . . Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine."—EZEK. xviii. 2-4.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."—1 COR. xv. 22.

"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."—ROM. v. 20.

"Though by one man sin has entered, and through sin, death; yet by Another, who is the Man in whom all are made, grace may re-enter, and recover the dying race. This is the method of God to convert the conditions of the curse into the very instruments of blessing."—SCOTT HOLLAND, *Creed and Character.*

"Apart from Christ, I feel that there dwells in me no good thing, but I am sure that I am not apart from Him, *nor are you, nor is any man.*"—F. D. MAURICE, *Theological Essays.*

"Behold, we know not anything.
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring."
—TENNYSON, *In Memoriam.*

VI.

THE GOSPEL AND HEREDITY.

We come now to the second question suggested by the prophet Ezekiel: What is the relation of God to those who come into the world under the curse of hereditary evil? We saw that the complaint the prophet endeavoured to meet had been expressed by the Israelites in the words: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." They were in Babylon, enduring the miseries of exile and servitude, through no fault of their own. Their fathers had done the wrong; they had to suffer the consequences. Ezekiel met the difficulty by declaring that every soul stood in a direct personal relation to God, and would receive fair, just, merciful treatment. Now we must admit that there are vast multitudes of men who inherit terrible disadvantages. They look as though they were born under a curse. You could almost think that a cruel, mocking fate had made whole nations and races, so dark do their lots seem. What an unspeakable moral problem Africa, with its teeming millions, has been for thousands of years, and must be for generations to come! And the problem is almost equally maddening as regards vast masses

of our own population. In view of the hard questions the condition of such raises, is it not a great gospel to hear God saying, "Behold, all souls are Mine. I know all about the disadvantages under which the great majority of men start in the race of life, and I will take every circumstance into consideration, and I will deal fairly and mercifully with every one."

It is beyond doubt that there are tendencies to moral evil which all of us bring as an awful heritage into the world. Theologians call it original sin. Definitions of it are given in all the great creeds of Christendom. One of the most widely known is contained in the Ninth Article of the Church of England: "Original sin . . . is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and *therefore in every person born into this world it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.*" The Westminster Confession states the doctrine in much the same terms. "Every sin, both original and actual . . . doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all its miseries—spiritual, temporal, eternal." The dogma, as thus stated, contains various elements. It asserts that there is a universal tendency to evil; but it also declares that tendency to be sin, and deserving of God's wrath and eternal

damnation. We must admit the fact of the tendency to evil; but it seems to me a frightful error to call a fault of nature, for which we are not personally responsible, sin, and deserving of immeasurable punishment. It would be more in harmony with the facts of experience to call it a *disease*—a disease which has become the ground of God's most merciful judgment on man, and the occasion for the manifestation of His eternal pity and charity in Christ.

Quite apart from Scripture and Theology we must admit the fact of this universal tendency to evil. Science calls it the law of heredity. It is one of the most solemn facts of our nature. This is how a wise, strong-minded man, Dr. Dale of Birmingham, puts the fact. "The guilt of my wrongdoing is mine, and altogether mine. And yet I do not stand alone. The blood of a hundred generations is in my veins, and the sins and virtues of my remotest ancestors have affected the substance and structure of my brain, the movements of my pulse, the strength of my physical passions, the keenness of my physical sensibilities. . . . As the result of the character and habits of our forefathers, some of us are easily kindled to furious anger, some of us are cold and selfish, some of us have to fight with sluggishness, some with grosser and darker passions."[1] These are the facts which close observers of life have gathered up into their demonstrations. They have shown how temper, character, habits, faults, sins seem to run in the blood, and are reproduced from age to age.

[1] "Lectures on the Ephesians," pp. 101, 102.

Just as we see the physical likeness of parents in their children; so, also, do we find their mental and moral affinities, even their mannerisms, transmitted. Children often walk and speak like their parents, and strange to say, even write like them.

No adequate statement, however, of this law would leave out of view the good side of it. If we receive a heritage of evil, so also we receive a heritage of good. It is to the operation of this principle that the human race owes its knowledge, power, security, moral progress. The individual cannot be cut off from the race. We are all parts of a larger whole. For good and for evil we are bound together.

And how has God dealt with a race that has multiplied and replenished the earth, under this awful tendency to evil? Has it been merely the object of His displeasure and wrath? Rather has it awakened and called forth His Infinite Pity, His Divine Self-sacrifice, and His Loving Wisdom, to redeem. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded; and the very laws and conditions of social unity, which have caused the poison of evil to spread from generation to generation, have been caught up into the sphere of His redeeming purposes, and have been made the channels and instruments of redemption. "Into the core of each man's heart the poison had entered. What could eject it? what could make each man right? what could make society pure? The answer comes. 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sins.' There is a new life-blood put into this nature of ours. God

Himself has infused it. The Son of God has taken our flesh and blood."[1] If all receive from the first Adam an entail of evil, so all from the Second Adam receive a heritage of good. "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One shall the many be made righteous." God will see to it that the law of heredity shall involve no man in more curse than blessing. The evil wrought by the first Adam shall be more than counterbalanced by the good that flows from the Second Adam. The poison shall not spread more widely, and work greater havoc, than the healing stream, and life-giving grace shall overflow for good. And thus we see that the race, which has spread under an hereditary tendency to evil, has been grasped by God's almighty love; the poisonous influence has been arrested, and into its heart's core a new, fresh, healing life-blood has been poured.

And now we are able to turn hopefully to the case of those who reveal the entail of evil in its worst forms, who begin the battle of life under the accumulated burden which generations of passionate, idle, vicious ancestors have transmitted to them, who do not seem to get the chance of a fair start in this world at all. "Children are born paupers; children are born criminals. Hereditary paupers and hereditary criminals form distinct races, separated from the rest of the community; having their own physical peculiarities which are transmitted from generation to generation, their

[1] F. D. Maurice, "The Epistles of St. John," p. 50.

own traditions, their own social habits, their own unwritten laws. For those who belong to these races by birth it is hard to emerge and live a better life." [1]

Think, then, of the awful lot of those who begin life thus, and then ask yourself what is the relation of God to them. Apply the spirit of Ezekiel's gospel, apply to their case the principle on which God has dealt in mercy with our whole race in Christ, and then will you not say that He who declared that all souls were His, and who "concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all," must view with infinite pity those poor creatures who begin existence with a wrecked and broken life, and that He must view their dark and passionate careers in the light of the tremendous disadvantages under which they were begun? We know that children who are born with mental and physical defects excite human pity. Is there anywhere a more tender and pathetic sight than to witness a mother bending over the little life crippled from its birth, deformed when it was born, and who lavishes all the wealth of her beautiful love upon it? Is it not true that if there be in any well-regulated home a poor blind, or lame, or sickly child, it becomes at once the centre of the home tenderness, and the object of general sympathy and care? And can we suppose that the heart of God is not touched with compassion for those who enter upon the awful responsibilities of an earthly existence with defects of mind and heart and

[1] Dr. Dale, "Lectures on the Ephesians," p. 102.

body which were transmitted to them? Is it not the case that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ has touched man's heart with a new pitifulness for wrecked and sinful lives; so that Christian philanthropy now moves like a sweet pure angel in dark and ugly places, and throws around the most unfortunate and helpless the arms of a sacred tenderness and pity? And must it not be so with the Infinite Father of all? May we not then say with the utmost confidence that the inherited evil, under which all men more or less, and some men and nations in particular start life, instead of awakening the wrath of God, and exposing the soul to the certainty of eternal death, must call forth His pity, and His mercy, and redeeming love? When the children of Israel said, "Our fathers ate sour grapes, and our teeth are set on edge," the Divine reply was, "What mean ye that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel? You shall not be condemned for what you could not help. Is not My way equal? I will make every allowance, I will deal fairly and mercifully with you; for all souls are Mine." And so we may be sure that so far as any man or every man begins life with a certain tendency to evil (original sin is a contradiction; there can be no such thing), that fact, instead of increasing condemnation, will be regarded as a reason for merciful judgment. To start life with a tendency to evil must greatly mitigate and reduce the guilt of all the after-life. And we know that God will take that circumstance into account, and make due allowance for it. It is by such reflections as these that the conscience

of the Modern Disciple may be relieved from the moral confusion in which it has not unfrequently been placed.

The Gospel, then, round which our thoughts gather is that man is a spiritual being directly related to God, and that every human soul is an object of God's gracious care. In every man God has a personal interest. He deals with us in the mass, for He sees us with all our surroundings and history, and He makes every allowance. He deals with us one by one, for He loves every man, and has redeemed every man in His Son. God stands related to us not simply through the operation of universal and unbending laws, but by a direct and loving contact. Towards every individual He will reveal Himself with perfect wisdom, perfect righteousness, perfect love. He will not show weak indulgence to any, but a wise and righteous love to all. All souls are His, and there is not one, however far gone astray, however sodden in sin, however involved in the evil network of circumstances and habits, however overpowered and crushed by temptations that proved too strong, however despised and cast out by religious and social pharisees, but that unhappy soul still belongs to God, and for it the Saviour died. To such souls the All-Merciful is saying, "Why will ye die?" and when He deals with them it will be in sovereign righteousness and love.

If you find any momentary difficulty in accepting this statement as true, reflect, I pray you, in what a horrible theory its denial would land you. Could

you bring yourself to believe that there are some wretched souls for whom God has no kind thought, no tender feeling, no purpose of love and mercy? God gave them life, He preserves them in being; it is under laws that He has created that they bear this fearful entail of evil; they depend on Him; without His supporting hand they would perish, and yet He has no compassion for them. They have the same powers and capacities as other men; they are capable of trusting, loving, obeying God; there is some soul of secret goodness in the worst of them; but He manifests towards them no regard, He withholds from them His enlightening truth, He keeps them from His saving grace, and shuts up His heart from them, and has been pleased to pass them by, to withhold mercy, and to ordain them to despair and wrath, and to leave them to perish. Does not a dreadful doctrine like that appear to you infidelity of the very worst kind? Is it not a hideous dream, begotten in the nightmare periods of a cruel theology? And can you wonder that such a representation of God, when set forth as the Gospel, has driven multitudes into despair and agnosticism? "I will," said John Stuart Mill, "call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures." It was a noble protest of eternal morality against a caricature which he mistook for Christianity.

You have read of wretches in China and India who cast out their sickly and deformed children, and leave them to perish of cold and neglect. You have read of

savages in Africa who forsake their old and infirm parents, and give them up to die of hunger and want, or to become food for the wild beasts of the forest; and you know the feelings of indignation which rise as you read of such shameful deeds. All the instincts of our common humanity cry out against such cruelty; every noble feeling rises in protest against such barbarism. And yet for ages good and earnest men, led away by a few passages of Scripture which they did not understand, attributed unspeakably worse things than these to God. They have taught that He brings souls into the world, and supports them by His Providence, and causes His sun to shine for them, and His rains to fall on their behalf, and the earth to yield its increase; and yet He has deliberately planned their ruin. He condemns them for what they cannot help; and He has done this, not with one or two, but with countless myriads, with unspeakable multitudes of the human race. Just as the great Niagara has rolled on and on for ages, bearing over the precipice its vast volume of water, which has gone plunging, whirling headlong into the seething abyss below; so there has been this great stream of ruined souls rushing on and on through age after age, and sweeping on and over into the bottomless pit of darkness and ruin for ever. And through all those ages God has remained indifferent; He has seen it all, known all about it, watched it all from His high and holy throne, but has done nothing to prevent it. He determined that it should be so; He planned that ruin Himself.

Thank God it is all a caricature, a false, and fearful, and horrible dream sprung from disordered brains, during the dark and morbid period of human thought; and one of the miracles of history is that good and true men could ever bring themselves to believe it, and yet go on trusting and loving God. As John Ward's wife said to him: "It is very terrible; but oh, John, what sublime faith to believe God capable of such awful cruelty, and yet to love and trust Him!"[1] Thank God there are few who believe it now, and the number is daily becoming less. Life is dark enough, and is terrible enough, without being burdened with a theology that makes God hateful and human life the sport of a cruel Fate, and the future world an infinite chamber of horrors. I would have you fall back with repose and comfort on the words of the old Hebrew prophet, who speaking in God's name could stand up before sin-laden and suffering men and say: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, all souls are Mine"—all of them, in every land, in every age, the sinful and the good, the happy and the miserable, those who began life with every opportunity, and those who have started their careers weighed down beneath hereditary curses and evils; those who have made the best of life's opportunities, and those who look back on wasted and misspent years—all of them belong to God, all of them have been redeemed by our Lord Jesus Christ; and in those grand words we Modern Christian Disciples find our best answer to all dark questionings, an encouragement to our strongest

[1] "John Ward, Preacher," by Margaret Deland.

faith, and a warrant for keeping an eternal hope burning brightly for every man.

"Oh yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood.

"That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete."

"Behold, all souls are Mine."

THE VALUE OF A MAN.

"Believe it, 'tis the mass of men He loves;
And, where there is most sorrow and most want,
There most is He, for there is He
Most needed."

"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."—ISA. xiii. 12.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—JOHN iii. 16.

"A man in the old Babylon, a man in every later Babylon, was not accounted more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir. It was the principle of the society that he should be accounted *less* precious; for the sake of the outward splendour and glory the human being was sacrificed; the *person* was given up for the *thing*. Here is the one adequate, satisfactory exposition of the cause of the fall of empires."—F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*.

"The rank is but the guinea stamp:
The man's the gowd for a' that."—BURNS.

VII.

THE VALUE OF A MAN.

The words are both a promise and a threat—a promise to the toiling, suffering millions, who are thought of less value than fine gold, a threat to the city which sacrificed human beings to outward splendour. The immediate reference is to the overthrow of Babylon, which, at the time these words were spoken, was at the height of her glory and power. In the nineteenth verse she is called "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." It was a city of palaces and gardens, and was built on the most favoured spot on earth. There, according to tradition, was the cradle of mankind; it was the original Garden of Eden. On that site the city stood. The palace of its king covered miles of ground, and was surrounded by hanging gardens, rising one above another, rich in all the luxuriance of artificial cultivation. The city seemed destined to ever-increasing glory and dominion. But the principle on which all this greatness rested was the sacrifice of human life to worldly splendour. Babylon regarded wealth, luxury, dominion, glory above the lives of men. It was believed there that a man was less precious than

a wedge of gold, and therefore the city was doomed to destruction. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver, and as for gold they shall not delight in it." The men who had set no value on human life would find no value set upon their own lives. The foe would dash their young men to pieces, and would have no pity on their wives and children. The city would be put to the sword, and its inhabitants would become so scarce "that a man would be more precious than fine gold." Their glorious city would become a heap of ruins, and would be utterly deserted. The punishment would be according to the sin. The sin was contempt for man's life and happiness, and the penalty would be desolation, extermination, scarcity of the beings they had contemned.

So it has ever been in the world's history. Rome threw away her legions for glory and conquest, and at last was left without soldiers to defend her own walls against the barbarian hordes that assailed her. Spain was once the greatest power in Europe, but the lust of gold and conquest fell upon her. In the mines of Mexico she enslaved the Indians, and worked and tortured them with unspeakable cruelty; and ever since then Spain has fallen back and lost her place among the foremost nations, for lack of men. Thus the threat has ever been repeating and fulfilling itself in history.

But the words are a promise as well as a threat—a promise that a time would come when a right value

would be set upon a man, when a new estimate would be made of the worth and dignity of human nature. And the promise has already been grandly fulfilled. And when the life and teaching of Christ are better understood, and more faithfully applied to the problems of society, it will be still more perfectly fulfilled. For the Incarnation of the Son of God was the great witness which God has made to the worth and dignity of man, the proof that in His sight there is nothing on earth so precious as man.

I have said that this promise pointed to a great revolution which would take place in the world regarding the estimate to be put on man—a revolution which is not yet completed. And, indeed, nothing could be more opposed to the "ruling ideas" of the ancient world, and, indeed, of many in the modern world, than that a man should be more precious than fine gold.

Every age of the world, and every nation and society, has what may be called its "ruling ideas" or beliefs. It articulates or expresses them in its institutions, laws, ideals, and aims. Find out these ultimate ideas of a nation, and you will know the character of the people and their institutions. If these beliefs are good, the society will be good; if they are bad, the society will be bad. So-called practical men often laugh at faith, and ideas, and theories, and thinkers. They ask, "What have these to do with life?" and the answer is, that no great movement of mankind ever took place without some great thought, belief, conviction being the inspiration and source of it. The first step towards progress is

to awaken true convictions, mighty beliefs, lofty ideals in the minds of men: their realisation and application are sure to follow. And when you have discovered a man's highest thought, you will have found out the principle which will in the end rule his whole life; for what is highest in thought ultimately controls all thoughts and all actions.

Hence it is that religion has proved such a mighty influence on national and individual life. "Tell me," said Thomas Carlyle, "what a man's religion is, and I will tell you what sort of a man he is." And the words are profoundly true; for what a man really does in his heart believe, will mould and fashion his whole life. The really living faith of a nation gets expressed in its life, until the whole framework of society is a representation of the faith of the people, just as the picture is a realisation of the thought of the artist.

Now apply for a moment these principles to those ancient nations of the East, of which Babylon was a type. They believed in gods cruel, bloodthirsty, despotic, and in the end the life of the people shaped itself after that ideal: they became cruel, bloodthirsty, despotic. They had no regard for human life; they esteemed glory, dominion, splendour more precious than the lives of men. Of late years Eastern explorers have excavated the sites of some of those ancient cities, and many inscriptions, sculptures, and bas-reliefs which formerly adorned their palaces have been transferred to the British Museum, and give us a vivid idea of the spirit of those old despotisms. They all bear witness

to the worship and glorification of power, and the degradation and oppression of man. You behold pictures of mighty kings riding down their foes, bending their bows against cities, receiving the submission of their enemies, and then rewarding them with torture and death. You see other pictures of hundreds of men bending beneath the lash of the taskmaster, and striving to raise some vast mass of stone shaped like a winged lion or bull with man's head; and others, again, of returning armies bringing back captives of all nations and races, to be sold in thousands as slaves. The following words of a king named Asshur-Nasir-Pal, who is supposed to have lived some two hundred years before the time of Isaiah, throw a clear light upon these sculptures. They are taken from an inscription recovered by Mr. Layard, now in the British Museum. Speaking of his treatment of a revolted city the king says: "Their men, young and old, I took prisoners. Of some I cut off the feet and hands, of others I cut off the noses, ears, and lips. Of the young men's ears I made a heap; of the old men's heads I built a minaret. I exposed their heads as a trophy in front of their city. The male children and female children I burnt in the flames. The city I destroyed, and consumed, and burnt with fire." We speak of the glories of ancient Babylon, but there are few who think of the millions of lives whose blood was poured out like water to build up her grandeur. The people worshipped power, dominion, glory, worldly splendours; they were reckless of the lives and happi-

ness of men; they counted the golden wedge of Ophir more precious than human lives, and for that reason the prophet denounced their cruelties, and foretold their utter downfall.

Now turn to Christ. What are the ruling ideas of His life and teaching? What are the principles on which He proposed to base man's life? Well, as the centre and crown of all His teaching, as the great vital principle on which His Gospel reposes, we have the revelation of God as the Almighty Father, infinitely holy, perfect, loving. In all the life and words of Jesus we see God as the Sovereign Father, One who loves all men as His children, who hates no man on earth. He is the universal Father. Out of His love came forth millions of worlds, which float in the great immensity with all their varied life and beauty and order; out of His love came all spirits, intelligences, moral beings, that they might enjoy His gifts, and do His will, and respond to His protecting love. He has made man in His own image, as His own child, and He loves to bless His children, to do them good, to guide, and train, and redeem them, so that at last they may participate in His own blessedness for ever. That is the revelation of God made in the life and teaching of Jesus: "When ye pray, say 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.'" "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask Him?" Jesus wrought the works of the Father; works of truth,

love, grace, wrought for the good of men. He fed the hungry, cared for the suffering, cured the diseased, cheered the sorrowing. He showed by His deeds that He valued the most abandoned and the most sinful as more precious than all worldly pomp and glory. He went and lived among the guilty that He might lead them to a better life. He did not stand apart from the outcast and depraved as the formalist and self-righteous; but He sought to draw them all to a purer life by the tenderness of His love, the beauty of His holiness, and the mystery of His cross and passion. In this way He set forth the truth about God.

But the truth about God necessarily implied a truth about man. The idea of man springs directly from the idea of God. When God is revealed as our "Father in heaven," who pities His children and has sent His Son to save them, then man's life rises at once in dignity and worth. Christ revealed the common brotherhood of men. Men divided by race and religion did not dream they owed any duties to one another. Men belonging to the same nation, but separated by rank, caste, wealth, saw no value in each other, save as they could secure some advantage out of each other. Oppression, cruelty, war, were sure to prevail so long as there was no bond of union. But out of the idea of a universal Fatherhood rises the idea of a universal Brotherhood. That is the basis of a redeemed human society. When I believe every man is my brother, equally with myself a child of God, then I shall deem his life as precious as my own. And if I believe my

own life is more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir, so also shall I deem his. There is no other basis on which brotherhood can ultimately stand but that.

And out of Brotherhood necessarily spring Fellowship and Sympathy, Freedom and Equality. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but all are one in Christ." Brotherhood makes slavery impossible. The cruel oppression and degradation of the many for the sake of the few pass away when we feel that all belong to one household, have one Father, are redeemed by one Saviour, and look forward to one final home.

These are the most simple, radical principles of the Gospel; these *are* the Gospel; its root ideas set free from the theological formulas which have so often obscured it. Do they not fulfil the promise: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir"? Do they not reveal the true worth and dignity of man, and provide a secure basis on which a perfect society may be erected? Were you to withdraw the life and teaching of Christ from influence over the thoughts of men, how would you show that there is a preciousness in man's life? Apart from the belief that there is one Father, how would you show that men are brothers? Why should not might make right? Why should not a man esteem fine gold as more precious than the lives of his fellowmen? Why should there not be privileged classes? Why should not the rich man glory in his wealth, and

the strong man in his strength, and the wise man in his wisdom? Why should not the principle be, "Every man for himself, and let the weak go to the wall"? Why should we take so much care of the old, the infirm, the incurable? Why should not the chemist grant them a speedy euthanasia? I ask where, apart from the teaching of Christ, do you find a basis for those ideas of the essential worth of every man's life; those ideas of Brotherhood, Self-sacrifice, Progress, Liberty, which are the inspiration of all that is noblest and most sacred in modern life? How will you prove that they are not a mockery?—or save them from being extinguished under the pressure of selfish and class instincts? One of the best influences in the world today is the conviction that there is in every man's life, however poor, ignorant, degraded, a sacredness and worth that surpass all worldly pomp and splendour. But I do not know what to make of that conviction, or how to justify it apart from Christ and His Gospel. You may depend that the Gospel is the secret inspiration of all the efforts that are now made to improve the world, and to raise and dignify the lives of men. They go on because Christ has thrown in His lot with the interests of Humanity, and is leading the world up to a brighter future.

And it is simply a fact of history that Christ has been the inspiration of every great movement which in past ages has helped forward mankind. He gave a new sacredness to life. He put an end to the old gladiatorial shows. He ended the old system of in-

fanticide. He awakened a new feeling of pity for the suffering and distressed. He destroyed slavery. He vindicated the dignity of man because he is a man. He took upon Himself the flesh of common men and lived the life of a poor man. He did not honour man because he is king, or philosopher, or soldier, or statesman, but because he is a child of God and heir of immortality. He taught men to feel that true greatness is goodness, and hence we sing to-day, what no poet before Christ would have thought of writing:—

> "Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
> 'Tis only noble to be good;
> Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood."

And what Christ has been doing in the past He will continue to do, and there is much which still needs to be done. There are many ways in which life is still based on the old Babylonian principle, and place, wealth, splendour, worldly success are put before the interests of Humanity. The principles of Christianity are not yet developed in our national life in anything like their length and breadth. But I want you to realise that these great fundamental beliefs regarding the Fatherhood of God, and the Sonship and Brotherhood of men, regarding the possibilities of the recovery and redemption of the lowest and most abandoned of men, provide a foundation on which all that is most precious in our Christian civilisation has already been based, and on which it

must continue to build until the whole life and activity of the nations of the world rest on these principles, and give expression to them in every direction. There is therefore still a great function for them in our modern life. They must be applied to all our political social, and industrial questions; to all that concerns man as a citizen, a member of a vast social organism, and as a producer, consumer, distributer of the wealth of the world. We shall never get our great practical difficulties between man and man settled until they are settled on the basis which the life and teaching of Christ provide. It is because the old Babylonian principle is still so vigorous that there is still so much hopeless poverty; so many vile rookeries where the poor herd together in misery and indecency; so many rotten ships and sweating dens and gambling hells, and other places of unmentionable infamy; so many quarrels between capital and labour, masters and servants; so much unrest and discord. We are all in our measure responsible for these things. There will always be sweating dens so long as customers want to buy goods for less than it costs to produce them; there will always be hopeless poverty so long as a man is cut down to the last penny on which he can live. And the evil works in a thousand other ways, and it all springs from accounting fine gold more precious than a man. There is one final remedy for the whole evil, and only one; and that is, to go back to Christ's view, to take up His teaching, and to apply it to life in all directions. Let it be once

heartily believed that all men are spiritual beings, children of God, brothers in Jesus Christ, heirs of immortality, and then all their relations with one another will be ordered in righteousness, purity, equity, love; all life will be ennobled and dignified, and the whole common round and daily task will be glorified; and every man, from the highest to the lowest, will go forth to his duty with a new sense of dignity and moral and spiritual worth. It is for us as Modern Disciples of Christ to help to hasten on that blessed consummation.

FAITH IN THE MORAL ORDER OF THE WORLD.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

—TENNYSON, *Geraint and Enid.*

"The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."—JOB xvii. 9.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."—PS. xxiv. 3-5.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—MATT. vi. 33.

"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."—PS. i. 6.

"Courage, brother! do not stumble,
Though thy path be dark as night;
There's a star to guide the humble:
Trust in God and do the right."

VIII.

FAITH IN THE MORAL ORDER OF THE WORLD.

No word is so significant in the ancient Hebrew literature as the term Righteousness. The religion of Israel was ethical; it was penetrated and pervaded with moral fervour. "Israel and the Bible," said the late Matthew Arnold, "have a speciality for Righteousness, and for giving us an enthusiasm for it." The ancient Israelites "dwelt upon the thought of conduct, and right and wrong, till the Not Ourselves, within us and around us, became to them adorable eminently and altogether as a Power that makes for Righteousness." It is quite true that we meet with a great deal in the Old Testament that revolts and shocks us. What else could we expect? We have the image of God's mind reflected and refracted there, in the history of a fierce and carnal people who were in continual conflict with the Power that was leading them on, but which, in spite of all their vices and crimes, they were made to feel was a God of holiness and righteousness. "Israel had yet much to learn and much to unlearn as to what true morality is. . . . But the remarkable thing is that the claim is made. Morality is claimed for God: God

is declared to be irrevocably on the side of what man knows as righteousness. And this truth is proclaimed not as a discovery, but as a revelation from God Himself."[1] It was this which separated the Old Testament from all other sacred literature. The religion of Israel stood above all others in the purity of its ethical conceptions. "It was the final distinction between Polytheism and the religion of Israel that the former emphasised power, the latter the moral element to which it subordinated and conjoined power."[2] The God of Israel was absolute, immutable, eternal Righteousness: "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee." He must be worshipped in the beauty of holiness. The sacrifice of the wicked would be an abomination unto Him; but the prayer of the upright would be His delight. The religious man must therefore be a righteous man. No people could really worship a God who declared Himself to be righteous in all His ways—a hater of all wickedness and robbery; One in whose eyes a false balance was an abomination—without seeking to become a people of clean hands and pure hearts. All worship that did not issue in righteousness of life would be a daring hypocrisy. The true God was on the side of righteousness, and to be false to righteousness was to be a traitor to God. And thus men like Job, Abraham, Moses, who were

[1] See able article in "Lux Mundi" by late Aubrey Moore on "The Christian Doctrine of God."

[2] Quoted in "Lux Mundi," from *Edinburgh Review*, April 1888.

declared to be the friends and worshippers of the true God, although not perfect, yet tried by the moral ideas of their own age, were the best men of those times; the men who most clearly reflected the Divine Righteousness, and sought to conform their lives to it.

The familiar expression, "he that hath clean hands," takes us from the contemplation of the abstract character to the man in active life. The righteous man whom the Lord loved was a man of honourable dealings. His transactions would bear scrutiny. They would stand the test of time. He was the incorruptible man, the one who could be trusted, who would not be bribed, who would not defile himself with dishonourable transactions. This was the ideal of a religious man that arose in the Hebrew nation. It was the ideal which that nation found hardest to retain, from which it most frequently lapsed, but which prophet after prophet rose to hold up before them. It grew in clearness and strength as the nation advanced, and became the greatest power working for the moral elevation of mankind.

And this Moral Ideal has been incorporated in the teaching of Christ and His apostles. The obligations of righteousness have not been relaxed but strengthened by the Gospel. "Not one jot or tittle of the old revelation of God, as a God of Righteousness, is lost or cancelled. The moral teaching is stern and uncompromising as ever. God's love, which is Himself, is not the invertebrate amiability, or weak good-naturedness,

to which some would reduce it."[1] The infinite love and compassion and tenderness for every man, on which we have been dwelling, are not inconsistent with Absolute Righteousness, or with the determination that men shall be righteous in all their ways. If any man thinks that righteousness of life and cleanness of hands can be dispensed with now, that fair dealing and truthfulness and uprightness of life are not requisite where there is a profession of faith, it is necessary to tell that man that he is in deadly error. This is a fundamental conviction of all sincere Modern Discipleship. Righteousness is no rival to faith. Whatever difficulties we may have about creeds, we know that it must be right to do right. There is one eternal and unchangeable condition of the Divine favour and blessing—a condition which will never be set aside or relaxed, for which no prayers or Christian experiences or professions can ever be the slightest substitute—and that condition is Righteousness, Cleanness of hands.

The ideal, then, of the good man which grew up under the ethical religion of Israel was that of a man of moral incorruptibility and righteousness, a man who in all his dealings with his fellow-men was absolutely straightforward and clean handed. And that same ideal has been embodied in the teaching of the Gospel. And, therefore, it is one which we must hold up steadily before this present age.

The dangers and temptations which beset men vary from generation to generation. Our fathers had diffi-

[1] "Lux Mundi," p. 76.

culties to face and problems to solve in their moral and spiritual life that are unknown to us, and we have doubts and dangers that were unknown to them. There was a time when the greatest trial to faith was the duty of confessing Christ in the face of an unbelieving and persecuting world. That is not the difficulty now. I will tell you what I think is the hardest task to-day. It is to retain an unshaken faith in the absolute claims of righteousness, and, at all costs, to carry that principle into the midst of the commercial, political, social and religious life of this nineteenth century. Any one truly acquainted with the practical difficulties of Modern Discipleship will admit that this is for the majority of busy, enterprising men the hard thing to do. There is where the shoe pinches.

We live in the midst of fierce rivalries and competitions, of unregulated and over-stimulated ambitions. The race for gold, place, power was never before so keen. There is for most men no such thing as standing still or going on quietly. Every man must push forward, and hold his own, and keep wide-awake, and let no opportunity slip, and watch every movement, or he will find himself undermined, swept aside, stranded, crushed down, and trodden underfoot by a thousand competitors. And all around you there are unscrupulous men; they will lie, they will cheat, they will misrepresent, they will hit you in the dark and behind your back, they will trip you up, they will not fight fair. It is so everywhere, more especially in business

and public life; but you will find it so in social life, you will find it so in the Church. We live in an age when the old traditions and familiar bonds that held men together are rudely snapped. There is a general decay of authority, and a weakening of the sense of moral obligation. The temptations to unrighteousness and uncleanness of hands are everywhere.

But however difficult it is to hold up the moral ideal in the midst of all these fierce competing passions and rivalries, and to make it supreme and regulative of the whole life, the Christian Disciple recognises that it must be done. The absolute imperativeness of righteousness is with us no open question. It is a fundamental principle. With whatever consequences, at whatever costs, Christ's disciples must be men of clean hands. Righteousness can never give place to expediency. Everywhere and at all times it ought to prevail, and therefore it can and will prevail. For us the practical law of life must be: "I can because I ought."

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When duty whispers low 'Thou must,'
> The youth replies, I can."

And that is what makes the achievement glorious, and what calls forth in man, age after age, some manifestation of the martyr spirit. To-day the "noble army of martyrs" is not augmented by men and women who are called to suffer at the blazing stake, or in the lion's den, but by those who walk with

their honour unstained amid all moral laxity, and false social standards, and corrupt business principles, and political expediencies, and immoral solicitations. And be assured of this, that all those who walk through our Exchanges and Courts and Assemblies, pure in heart and clean in hand, who in all their transactions retain and raise the standard of national righteousness, who in all their movements remain incorruptible, chaste, honourable, will not fail at last to be numbered among those who gain the crown and palm.

But I should not like to leave the argument there. Undoubtedly we must follow after righteousness let the consequences be what they may. But it would be strange and perplexing to our faith to find righteousness always thwarted and baffled in the battle of life. We need the martyr spirit. We must be content to let everything perish rather than forswear our consciences; but what I wish now to point out is that righteousness is inherently the strongest principle, and that the world is so constituted that in the long run it must prove itself the victorious principle.

This has always been one of the deepest convictions of man's heart. Take the case of Job. In the midst of his misery he could not reconcile himself to the traditional and orthodox interpretations of God's ways: God's dealings with him were strange, dark, unfathomable. But yet he never lost faith in the moral order which would preserve a good man from final confusion and defeat. He was sure that righteousness would

triumph, and this conviction he expressed with splendid confidence. "The righteous, also, shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Had Job given expression to that confidence when he was in the full tide of prosperity, we might not have thought much of it. When we read the magnificent description he gives us in the twenty-ninth chapter of his happiness and power before the terrible storm came that smote him to the dust, and left him desolate, homeless, bereaved, we may well believe that in those days Job never doubted that the moral order of the world was favourable to the righteous man.

> "As I was in the ripeness of my days,
> When the secret of God was upon my tent;
> When the Almighty was yet with me,
> And my children were about me;
> . . . . . .
> I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:
> My justice was as a robe and a diadem.
> Then I said, I shall die in my nest,
> And I shall multiply my days as the sand."

But all that was past and gone. Blow after blow had swept away everything, and the Patriarch, afflicted, wretched, sat on the refuse-heap of his ruined and blighted home, a solitary man—in the eyes of that age a God-forsaken man. And yet, behind all the terrible doubts that assailed him, there remained such a mighty faith in God and in the moral order of the universe, that his spirit rose up in confidence that the righteous man would not be vanquished; he would be able to

hold on, and the man of clean hands would wax stronger and stronger.

What is the meaning of this faith in the moral order of the world? Of course it does not mean that righteous men are never overborne, never crushed or defeated; that fidelity to principle does not sometimes come in the way of worldly prosperity. That would not be true. We know that good men have not seldom been trodden under the heel of unscrupulous and selfish ambition, and that bad men have not seldom obtained the highest prizes. Many righteous men have passed through similar experiences to those of Job, and have never been blessed with his recovered prosperity. They have died under a cloud of disaster and misfortune, when, had they been willing to sacrifice their principles, they might have lived happy and honoured. It is probable that all Job intended to express in his splendid burst of confidence was his profound conviction that, in spite of all the mystery and trouble of his life, the world was ruled by a good and righteous God, that righteousness was the principle of highest strength and endurance, and would in the end prove the victorious principle. He felt sure that it would all come right somehow and *somewhere*, and that in the end he would be justified and satisfied. In other words he believed in God and in the moral order of the world. And I submit that that faith is reasonable; it can be justified. I submit that in spite of the disasters and troubles which we see falling occasionally on good men, and the prosperity which we sometimes see enjoyed by bad

men, that God has so constituted the world that there is a natural tendency in things to push righteousness to the front, and that the rule and drift of things is, on the whole and in the long run, favourable to the man of clean hands.

There are times, no doubt, when, as we read history or watch human life, or suffer from some cruel injustice, we are tempted to think that righteousness is altogether eliminated from the conditions of success in this world: when it looks to us as though everything merely depended upon brute force, or cleverness, or worldly prudence and unscrupulousness. One looking on life in this morbid mood "Concludes," says Dr. Martineau,[1] "that the law of the strongest everywhere prevails: that the play of the world is a scrambling lottery, where the prizes are seized by the least scrupulous mind, and the most greedy hand, while the blanks are drawn, amid the laughter of the shrewd, by hesitating conscience and pious simplicity; that the very idea of right has no place except in the mind of man, and that *there* it is utterly powerless to remedy the wrongs of nature." But this impression is false. Righteousness is not an excluded condition of success in this life. It is the most vital, the most enduring power; and more and more the drift of the world is towards its gradual and final triumph. If you look deeply enough into life, you will find that the laws of nature are so constituted that they paralyse revolt against righteousness as soon as it reaches any great degree of defiance.

[1] Study of Religion, vol. ii. p. 117.

We see it to be so in almost every department of life. It is declared by every historian and close observer of this world's affairs. Gibbon, in his history of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and Thomas Carlyle, in his splendid prose poem on the French Revolution, tell the same story. In the institution of slavery in America, and in the terrible civil war which closed that shameful chapter of modern history; in the exposure of great commercial frauds, and in the ruin of their promoters; in the disgrace and downfall, through moral corruption and impurity, of men who once occupied high places in the world, you learn how God's laws set unrighteousness at cross-purposes with itself, and in the end secure its defeat. The evil may last for a long time, a bad and dishonourable man may have a successful career in robbery for many years, for the mill of God grinds slowly, though it grinds exceeding small; but at last the mysterious hand writes on the walls of every corrupt institution, over every dishonest man's business, over every rotten social system, the awful words of doom, and they pass away in disgrace and shame. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil. But one passed by, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." If you take, not superficial, but deep glances into life, you will find that there is embedded in the constitution of the world a moral order which sets bad and corrupt men at cross-purposes with themselves, and in the end secures their defeat; and which at the same time

supports and blesses the righteous man, and causes him to grow stronger and stronger. That in the mixed condition of this world's affairs there should be many anomalies, many apparent exceptions to the rule, is what we should expect. If these things did not occur, there would be no moral problem to face; everything would be clear; no justification of the ways of God would be required.

Another consideration is that God has combined strength with righteousness itself; for it is the only principle that can harmonise and regulate the whole inner life, and so set a man at peace with himself. There is no inward conflict. But above all, faith in the triumph of righteousness necessarily grows out of faith in God. Without God a man feels himself like an atom, a worm struggling against the evil of his own nature and circumstances. But when once he has truly believed in a living God, then he knows that he is not alone; God is with him, and if God is with him, defeat is finally impossible. Faith in the living God brings the confidence that the ultimate reality is righteousness, and that the ultimate laws by which the world is governed are moral laws, and that the final issues are moral. This is one of the great Fundamental Beliefs which the Modern Disciple of Christ will not let go. He believes in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, and this faith fills him with great joy. It stirs in him an enthusiasm which touches his whole life with sacred fire; for he knows that all is well with him; nothing can really harm him; no defeat is

possible. So long as he is struggling after righteousness, he is seeking harmony and communion with the ultimate principle of the universe, he is on God's side; One is with him who will guide him through all trouble and darkness, who will hold him up, and bring him off more than a conqueror. And therefore he faces life calmly, confidently, joyously. He has resolved to be a man of clean hands, to bear through life an incorruptible and stainless character; and to firmly trust in life and death One who is pledged to fight against all evil until it is utterly vanquished, and to make Righteousness eternally victorious through the whole universe.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE RACE.

"There is a soul above the soul of each,
A mightier soul, which yet to each belongs:
There is a sound made of all human speech,
And numerous as the concourse of all songs.
And in that soul lives each, in each that soul,
Though all the ages are its lifetime vast;
Each soul that dies, in its most sacred whole
Receiveth life that shall for ever last.
And thus for ever, with a wider span,
Humanity o'er-arches time and death;
Man can elect the universal man,
And live in life that ends not with his breath,
And gather glory that increases still,
Till Time his glass with Death's last dust shall fill."

—R. W. Dixon.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."—HEB. xi. 39, 40.

"We feel, as perhaps it was impossible to feel before, how at every moment influences from the past enter our souls, and how we in turn scatter abroad that which will be fruitful in the distant future. It is becoming clear to us that we are literally parts of others and they of us."

—DR. WESTCOTT, *The Historic Faith*, p. 247.

"That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

—TENNYSON, *In Memoriam*.

IX.

THE SOLIDARITY OF THE RACE.

In various ways the fact is thrust upon us that Humanity is one, that men of all ages and nations are bound together by ties it is impossible to sever. We are learning to recognise this community of life and interest in every direction. The different classes and orders of society are getting to feel that they are intimately united, that rich and poor, masters and workmen, are members one of another, and that if one class suffers all must suffer. The nations of the earth are beginning to realise that they are held together by vital bonds, so that famine or war or prosperity in one part of the world affects the interests of those who dwell far away. In the same manner we are learning to feel the unity of one generation with another. We are the children of the past. The ages that have gone by have bequeathed to us a vast inheritance of mingled good and evil; and we, in our turn, as we pass away, will leave a harvest of good and evil to those who follow us. The human race is one, bound together through all its separate parts, and through all its successive ages, by inseparable bonds. When we look back on

the earlier ages, and consider how the world's grey fathers contributed by their faithfulness and heroic struggles and noble lives and glorious deaths to our progress and happiness, we feel, with no unworthy self-disparagement, that without that splendid past, our age would be shorn of nearly all its glory. And when, again, we turn to our privileges and blessings, and consider how manifold are the gifts we enjoy for which they could only hope and pray, we feel, with no unworthy presumption, that without us they could not be made perfect.

It is this great law of dependence—the *solidarity* of the race, as we call it—on which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells in a remarkable passage. "And these all," he declares, "having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." The particular fact on which he dwells is that, in consequence of this law, no age is complete in itself. There must be a certain imperfection in the lives of men, a postponement of the highest good, a suspension of the perfect blessedness, a holding back of the final joy, a waiting for the ultimate fulfilment of the promise. Because all are sharers in a common life, all linked together, the consummation of bliss and glory cannot come to any until it comes finally to all. Not until the Divine work is completed, the whole spiritual organism evolved, the Kingdom of God perfected, the whole

of redeemed humanity gathered in and glorified, can the final rapture be known.

The writer is referring to the illustrious saints and martyrs and heroes of the ancient Hebrew faith. He has just read over the long muster-roll of their great names. There, he says, stand the mighty ones of past ages: there is Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses; and there, he says, is a great multitude of others, the splendour of whose deeds time would fail me to tell. And these all obtained a good report through faith. All of them, that is, received the witness of God's grace and favour: all of them were assured of the friendship and care of God; but yet there was something lacking in their lives. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." "These all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise." They were blessed, they were comforted, they were guided, they were sustained. They were not left to endure their hardships and trials unaided. The testimony was given them that they pleased God. All of them realised that there was a power in faith to lift them directly into the presence of God, and above all the disabilities of their age and circumstances. The essential and vital blessings of faith were not witheld from any one of them. But yet they were not perfect. God had provided some better thing for which they must wait. Their joy was incomplete. They did not obtain the full blessing. Their desires were not fully realised. They never received the promise. Down to the last

there was something unfinished in their lives. There was an appearance of frustration, of disappointment, of incompleteness, of ideals and hopes unrealised. And the reason for all this, declares this writer, is that Humanity is one Spiritual Organism of which no one member can be perfect without the rest. Hence the ultimate good is in the far future. The final blessedness could not be enjoyed by those early saints; they still wait until they can partake of it in conjunction with the whole of Humanity redeemed. There is a bond uniting all ages of the good together, and one generation cannot be made perfect before another. The Saints and Patriarchs and Prophets had to wait. Christ had to come. His Kingdom had to be established. All nations must be gathered into it. He must gather into one all the children of God that are scattered abroad. Evil must be vanquished. God's redeeming work must be completed. Then will come the final harvest home. Then those who went forth weeping, sowing precious seed, and those who gathered in the sheaves will rejoice together, and the "ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Then would be the final bliss. And so there must be waiting for the final blessing which God has to bestow upon mankind. Why, we shall presently consider. Neither those on earth nor those in heaven can receive the crowning joy until the last wanderer has been gathered into the fold, and the whole redeeming plan is completed.

This grand conception then of the nineteenth century, that Humanity is a vast organism of which the individual is but a part, and which is so attractive to us, because it is, at once, so profound and yet so simple, and helps us to explain so much, is, after all, not really new. It was familiar to the writers of the New Testament. There is, however, one fatal flaw in the present form of the doctrine, against which the Modern Disciple will be on his guard. As stated by many modern thinkers, it is utterly destructive of the dignity and immortality of the individual. It is, in fact, but part of a philosophical theory which denies the personality of God, as well as the personality and immortality of man. According to it there is no *permanent* Intelligence and Will at the heart of things. "The universe consists essentially in the evolution and reabsorption of transitory forms—forms that are filled with knowledge and shaped by experience only to be emptied and broken by death." [1] But no philosophy that would be faithful to the fundamental convictions of self-consciousness, and especially of the moral consciousness, can teach that. There is no deliverance of consciousness so clear as that we are each a separate self, with a will of our own, which we maintain even in our dealings with God Himself; and to the moral and self-conscious being it must seem "incredible that the successive generations should be used up and cast aside, as if character were not the only lasting product and the only valuable result of time." [2]

[1] Seth: "Hegelianism and Personality," p. 227.

[2] Ibid., p. 228.

Now it is a remarkable thing that the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews, in emphasising the idea of the interdependence of all lives on one another for their final blessedness, at the same time recognises the dignity and immortality of the individual soul. For he is engaged in recounting the triumphs of faith, and faith is that vital energy which is the root of all our conscious life. It is that faculty which lifts the spirit out of its environment into direct relation with God; it isolates it; it raises it above age and country, and makes it conscious of itself as personally and directly bound to God. Let us look at his words again from this point of view.

In this chapter, as we have seen, the writer has gone over the names of the most celebrated men and women in the history of Israel. They cover a wide period of time. They belong to many generations. They represent all kinds of people. Most of them had but a very feeble light with which to guide their steps. They lived in ages of privation and twilight. There were Abel and Enoch, belonging to that dim and distant period before the Flood. There were Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Joseph who lived in the Patriarchal age. Then came Moses inaugurating the new era of the Law. Then we read of men like Samson and Barak and Jephthah who lived in the wild and savage period of the Judges. Some of these men were conspicuous for their moral nobleness and elevation, and there were others whose lives were exceedingly imperfect and sinful. None of these received the promise; none of

them were made perfect. God's highest and final gifts were not bestowed on them, could not be bestowed then. But yet, says the writer, "all these had witness borne to them through their faith." No one of them was treated as though he merely existed to subserve another's good. Each one, according to his faith, received a blessing. Each one was granted all that was vital and necessary and suitable to his own needs. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he pleased God. Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. And Rahab the harlot, and Samson and Jephthah, men of passion and blood, received in their own way the witness, "God was not ashamed to be called their God." None of them could inherit the good, the final good; but all were treated fairly and justly. They all received the vital and essential blessings.

Now the principle we see illustrated through all this strange history is one that perfectly accords with our own moral consciousness, viz., that whilst we are all dependent on one another and share in a common life, yet we are also individuals, each a separate self, a spiritual being directly related to God; and that in relation to the paramount and essential blessings required by a spiritual being, God deals with us as individuals. Faith is that faculty of the soul that recognises that we are directly related to God. It is the soul's recognition of its sonship, its right to directly approach God. Faith isolates us, it draws us

apart, it separates us from all others in awful loneliness. We are no longer members of an organism, parts of a larger whole, but individual beings. Questions of age, or nation, or participation in a common life, have no place here. The soul touches God, is in communion with Him, feels itself precious in His sight, realises itself directly loved by Him; and that God should in all ages have called forth this faith in man's heart, and bound him directly by cords of love and duty to Himself, and then have cast him aside and allowed him to perish, is utterly incredible.

Here, then, we have the necessary qualification of the doctrine of the solidarity of the race. Here the dignity and preciousness of the individual self is recognised. This is what saves the order of the world from being unreasonable and immoral. Man is not all his days mocked by false hopes. These men and women who lived in ages of darkness were not merely created to contribute towards a blessedness in which they would never share. Faith put them into direct communion with God, lifted them above the limitations of nature, and enabled them to realise that they were more than mere links of a chain, elements in a larger whole, which must soon fall away and make room for others. They showed their relation to their age in their inability to rise above its traditions and customs; but God was no respecter of persons. He would not condemn men and women for what they could not help. He dealt with each in a wise and righteous and fatherly way; and although they could not receive the final good, which

could only come to them when it came to all, they every one received all that was vital and essential as spiritual beings.

And now we turn to the other truth involved in the doctrine of the solidarity of the race, that the full perfection and blessedness of the individual can only be reached through the perfecting of the whole body. All those of whom the writer had been speaking had witness borne to them through their faith. They all received the blessing they needed to start them on the divine way, and make them children of the promise; but yet there was much lacking. The full gift could not be imparted to them. Each man in his own solitary individuality may approach God. By faith he realises himself a spiritual being, enters into communion with God, realises his own sonship and immortality. But after that the full blessedness, the last crowning gift of God to him, will only be attained through the perfecting of the whole Body. And thus it is that all ages will receive it together, and in fellowship with one another. The Hebrew Patriarchs must wait. All generations must be gathered into one before the glory of God's vast counsels could be finally revealed.

And this is just what we should expect. The whole life of the universe confirms and illustrates the thought. Nothing in the world stands absolutely alone; nothing reaches its perfection and glory alone. To understand anything in this world you must consider it in relation to other things; and to perfectly understand any one

thing, you would have to understand all things. The tiniest flower you pluck and hold in your hand takes you beyond itself; only as you consider it in relation to the other parts of nature, and to the mind of man, do you see its full beauty.

> "Little flower! but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."[1]

Nothing is understood or perfected alone. What is it that imparts such beauty and perfection to spring and summer? It is that simultaneously all nature combines and co-operates towards the final result—the earth and the sky; the sun and the clouds; the long warm days and the short nights; the flowers and the birds; the bursting forth of fresh life from the earth, and the blossoming of fresh hope in the heart of man. The beauty and perfection of the world come from the co-operation of all its parts: mountains and valleys; the glory of the hills and the grandeur of the sea. It is the beauty and variety of fulness, combination, fellowship, harmony — flowers, trees, birds, winds, waters, sky uniting for the final result. And all this is suggestive of what is found in the spiritual region. The members of the earliest dispensation must come into fellowship with the latest, there must be a gathering together from all regions and all times, the Divine movement must complete itself, and then the full blessedness will be known.

[1] Lord Tennyson: "Flower in the Crannied Wall."

The same truth is suggested by man's social experience. It is in fellowship with one another that men reach perfection here. It is in proportion as society grows complex, varied, inter-related, that the various capacities of man are unfolded. In the simplest states of society, where men live together in a half savage and uncivilised condition, you find man's nature undeveloped. Each man supplies his own wants, and lives independent of his fellows, and therefore his whole energy is concentrated on the most elementary things. But as society becomes organised, mind develops, various gifts are discovered and employed, music and art and literature and science spring up. And so man is perfected in society. The whole experience of life is enriched, and all that can adorn and advance life is called forth.

Now these are the ideas we must associate with the words, "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." The Kingdom of the blessed and glorified, into which the saints of all nations and all ages are gathering, is the place where the full perfection and glory will be realised, because there the life of ministry and service will be perfected; because there the whole Divine movement for the redemption of Humanity will be completed; and there will arise that perfect beauty and harmony that come from the co-operation and union of infinite variety and fulness. The life which rises in the individual soul, which has been sealed with the witness of God's approval, which has been

disciplined by all the sorrow and trial of this life, which has been growing in fulness and beauty in heaven, will at last find its full joy and perfection in the everlasting fellowship and ministry of the Eternal City of God. And thus it is that those who have passed into that unseen state still wait their final joy. All must be first gathered home: the vanguard and the rearguard; the sowers and the reapers; the quick and the dead; fathers and children; the saints of the first ages and the saints of the last. In that final gathering the Son of Man will be found the centre of adoration and worship; the Lamb on the Throne—the eternal symbol of self-sacrificing love; the object of honour and praise from all races, ages, worlds; and then God's work will be seen in its finished glory. The whole spiritual wealth of Humanity will be disclosed. Every type of spiritual excellence will be there, and the Redeemed Society will be perfect; for each will find his full joy, and the full realisation of his own perfection in ministering and in being ministered to. "In [1] the eye of the Christian Founder, the true city of God is a city of spiritual commerce; . . . and from the mutual interchange of strength there at length emerges a perfect Divine Republic—a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

[1] Matheson, "Landmarks of New Testament Morality," p. 263.

Possibilities and Dangers.

SAMSON IN THE LAP OF DELILAH.

" Trust no lovely forms of passion,—
Fiends may look like angels bright."

" Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils."—MRS. BROWNING.

"And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."—JUDGES xvi. 20.

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."—2 TIMOTHY ii. 21, 22.

"How many a youth has treated his own bad passions like the petted lion, and instead of making them come to heel by a strong will, and keeping them bound in chains and controlled, has let them become his masters, and then he has at last felt himself driven to fight for very life."—CANON FARRAR.

"They only the victory win
Who have fought the good fight and vanquished
The demon that tempts us within."

X.

SAMSON IN THE LAP OF DELILAH.

Samson is the Hercules of the Bible, the powerful Hero and Champion who delighted our early years. His bright sunny nature, sparkling with wit, and overflowing with good humour, and his career, distinguished by deeds of conspicuous valour, and closed by a tragic and awful death, thrilled our childhood.

But as we have grown in years and experience, a new kind of interest has gathered round his name. After the legends have been stripped off, and the mythological elements of his life have been exposed, we can still discern, through the vista of ages, a great personality, most human in both its strength and weakness, most true to life in both the splendour of its achievements and in the pathos and humiliation of its fall. His career has, in all its essential features, been reproduced in every age of the world, and out of it there shine lessons of perennial fruitfulness and power.

For in all ages men of great gifts have risen up, and displayed a brilliant light that has endured for a time and penetrated far; and then, through some mortal weakness of character or will, their glory has grown

dim, and become extinguished. We see in this old world story a man who, by rich endowments of body and mind, rose to a high position of leadership; but who, through yielding to the baser side of his nature, was suddenly cast down, dishonoured, and ruined. He gave no adequate fulfilment of the promise of his youth. He had little in the end to show for the talents entrusted to him. He failed just as others have done; and when you read the story of his life in the light of a large experience, the mists and obscurities of time seem to roll off, and there stands before you the type and representative of all those men and women who fling away great opportunities, and squander great gifts, and end life in darkness and defeat, just through lack of that moral seriousness which would have enabled them to withstand the temptations of the world. We will then consider this Hero, firstly in his greatness and strength, and then in the awful tragedy of his temptation and fall.

Samson first of all rises before us as a young man, conscious of being consecrated to, and endowed of God for, a great mission. Born with the Spirit of God resting upon him, the morning of his life opens like a lovely summer dawn, when the sky is filled with trailing clouds of glory, and the mystery of light and colour foreshadows the splendour of the day. There breaks across his opening mind a vision of the great destiny to which he is called, and for which he has been supernaturally endowed.

According to the sacred story his parents, like the

parents of John the Baptist, were commanded, before he was born, to bring him up as a Nazarite. He was to drink no wine nor strong drink; and, as a perpetual sign of his consecration to God, his locks were to remain unshorn.

In those instructions we catch a glimpse of the evil of the times. The nation, having lost its birthright of freedom, was surrendering itself to those vices of sensual excitement and intoxicating pleasures which the future Leader and Champion was placed under a life-long vow to avoid.

Thus Samson grows up in the belief that he is consecrated to God, that there is a definite, divinely appointed work for him to do, and that God would endow him for that work with all the necessary strength. As he grew up, we are told, "the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of God began to move him in the Camp of Dan." There, as the boy sat by the camp-fires through the dark night, he heard the old warriors tell tales of heroism and daring. He would listen with bated breath to the stories of Joshua and Gideon, and of many an old hero who in past days had done glorious deeds; and as the fire danced and flickered in the darkness, and cast its fitful gleams upon his face, his comrades saw it lighted up with a generous enthusiasm to be a true fighter in the battle of life. All the nobility of his soul awoke in rebellion against the state of affairs. For more than a generation his country had been beneath the hard hoof of the oppressor. His people had been robbed of their

smiling corn-fields, and driven to gain a precarious and hardly purchased subsistence on the bare slopes of the Judean hills. They had lost heart. They had forgot their high calling, and most of them had yielded without a struggle for freedom. And Samson rose up in the consciousness that he was called to the work of delivering his people. Thus in the very opening of life he appears before us clothed in the first great element of moral strength, the consciousness of being called to a divinely appointed and glorious task.

Now we often speak about a youth choosing his profession; but with genius, with the world's great ones, it is not so: their work chooses them. The most efficient and commanding men of history felt themselves instigated, inspired, urged to their career by a strange force which they sometimes called their Genius, or Destiny, or Deity, but which they felt bound to follow. The great men of the sacred story felt that a Divine constraint was upon them. It were woe to them to disobey. And the deep truth which underlies this fact, which applies to you and to me, as well as to them, is this—that the first condition of all real nobleness of life, and of all substantial, heroic work, is that we feel life to be a sacred business, a Divine calling, a God-appointed task. No one can do anything really great unless he gives himself up to it with the devotion and self-forgetfulness which arise from the conviction that it is his mission and his duty to do that work. We render our best service under the consciousness of a Divine constraint. And that

would be a blessed experience should the conviction now dawn upon you that you are God's son, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and that whatever your life work may be, it is a task which God has given you to do, a task which it were everlasting ruin and disgrace in you not to do well.

With these convictions, then, Samson went forth to his great mission. Not that he always lived under the shadow of these noble aspirations. No man's life is a perfect unity. No one, especially, begins life with all his passions and desires harmoniously adjusted. There is an inward as well as an outward battle; and in the end the outward battle will generally depend on how the inward struggle is decided. In every man there glow not only the sacred enthusiasms which would lead him heavenward; but there live and beat in him also fierce and baleful fires which would consume his life, and there gleam false lights upon his path which would allure him to destruction.

Samson, with his splendid physical strength, had also the mighty passions of a strong man—passions which, held in restraint and controlled by a righteous will, were part of his true manly inheritance, but, ungoverned and pampered, would sweep him away from his sacred task, and rob him of his God-given strength, and bring his glory to the dust. That early incident in his life, when the young lion suddenly sprung upon him from the thicket, but which he was divinely enabled to slay, seemed sent to remind him that there was danger in his path, to warn him that just as he

slew the wild beast in the strength of God, so must he, if he would achieve his mission, bring into subjection to a holy will every desire and passion of his life.

But the sequel shows that he never truly learned that lesson. Nowhere through his life do you discover true unity of purpose. At no period did he remain utterly faithful to his vocation. All his activity was a mere sign of what he could do, of what he ought to do, if he would only crush down all baser passions. And yet whenever he did come under the inspiration of his true calling, whenever he was faithful to his early consecration to God, he showed such splendid powers, such skill, such endurance, such courage, such buoyancy of spirits, that you are compelled to feel that he had in him all the capabilities of a great Hero and Champion. As you see him going about in his noble recklessness, passing to and fro through the land of the Philistines, who cringe before him like dispirited dogs; as you watch his bearing amid the coldness and want of appreciation and the treachery of his cowardly countrymen, and, in spite of all hindrances, forcing his way to the very front rank and making the record of his marvellous deeds one of the most striking pages in the history of those strange times: as you see all this, you say, "Would to God this great Hero would bring his life into unity; would to God that he would set himself to become all that he is capable of being."

Samson, then, by his splendid gifts has forced his way to the front rank of the nation's life. He has acquired the right to be considered the ruler of a considerable

portion of Palestine. His very name strikes terror into the heart of the enemy. In every deed he shows marvellous strength, ready wit, invincible courage, fertility of resource, and vast endurance. There is nothing he might not accomplish were he only true to the ideal of his youth. He would have become the real deliverer of his people, and he would have utterly subdued foes who remained for generations to plague Israel.

But we must now turn to the dark side, and consider the awful tragedy of his temptation and fall. He does not stand alone in history. Alas! that both modern as well as ancient pages tell us how men of great gifts, holding high positions of public trust and honour, have sold themselves to soft lascivious eyes; who, although they have been able to break like threads of tow the new ropes which strong men have bound upon them, have been curiously powerless to break the web which softer hands have woven for their fall.

And so it was with Samson. Again and again you see this strong man drawn aside from his true vocation, yielding himself up to vice, tampering with his conscience, and trifling with his vow of consecration to God. At last he comes under the spell of one whose aim from the first was to ruin him. You read the story, and it has in it an eternal lesson. You see a man who ought to have been engaged in serious duties, drawn away from his stronghold, and going down among the smiling vineyards in the valley of Sorek, attracted thither by the soft languishing looks and

siren voice of a false and wicked woman. You watch the blandishments going on. You hear the plot laid. You see the Princes of the Philistines come with their promise of great rewards if Delilah can entice and beguile Samson to tell the secret of his strength. You see that he knows all about the treachery, has proof on proof that she is seeking to destroy him, and yet he will not shake off this fearful entanglement. He goes nearer and nearer to destruction. He suffers himself to be allured, to be entrapped, to be won over, until at last, her very slave and victim, he sinks into her arms, like the foolish bird charmed by the glitter of the serpent's eyes, and he tells her all his heart.

And now you watch the false woman's look as the mask falls off, and soft winning glances, and pouting lips, and the look of injured love are exchanged for the cruel features of a Medusa beneath whose flowing tresses the vipers' heads appear, until you can almost see their quivering fangs and hear the hissing of their foul venomous lips. Samson awakes to find himself shorn of his strength and utterly ruined. The mighty, sunny Samson, the flash of whose eyes had once so utterly unnerved his contemptible enemies, is in their hands now; and they triumph over him, and put out his eyes, and load him with fetters of brass, and drag him away to their loathsome prison-house, that he may pass the wretched remnant of his days in utter darkness, grinding at the mill.

Now let us ask: "What was the fatal flaw, the secret evil, which led to this tragic scene?" You must

not blame circumstances. As Thomas Carlyle says on Robert Burns, "The blame of his failure lies with himself. It is his inward and not his outward misfortunes that brought him to the dust. Seldom indeed is it otherwise. Seldom is a life morally wrecked, but the grand cause lies within." What, then, was it ruined Samson? It was moral levity; the lack of thorough religious and moral earnestness. He had splendid gifts. He knew that he was divinely called to a great work. But he never seriously pulled himself up before a temptation. He drifted on and on in wild recklessness, with occasional bursts of magnificent power, sending up now and then brilliant hints of what he could do if he only set himself seriously to life's task; and yet nothing was done of permanent value, and the secret source of his failure and ruin was that he had no moral thoroughness. He did not realise the supreme authority of conscience. He did not truly live in the fear of God. Right and wrong, purity and vice, did not stand out before him in all their naked, eternal distinctions. He never laid hold of his passions as he did the young lion in the way to Timnath, determined that they should yield to his superior will or he would perish in the struggle. He trifled with himself. He trifled with his high calling. He fooled away his gifts and opportunities. He sold his glorious birthright for a mess of wretched pottage.

And what is the lesson for us?

I answer: The uselessness of great gifts without

moral strength. "A man's power in England," once said an eminent judge, "will depend upon his knowledge, his eloquence, and his moral worth." The last is, of course, the crown of the whole. It is moral worth that gives weight and security to ability, and without it no man is truly great.

Unless you can say "No" to the tempter, unless you can resist the solicitations of evil, you will be weak, you will be a creature of circumstances, you will be unreliable, you will be morally certain to wreck your life.

That is the lesson brought home to us by the records of every age. The world has never been without men of courage, intelligence, high position, but who, because their great gifts and opportunities have not been supported by moral strength, by personal purity, and by severe integrity, have fallen down into sudden ruin, and whose names to-day call forth mingled pity and contempt.

I lay this down as a fundamental principle. You will find it true now; all history shows it to have been ever true, and, should you live, you will find it true fifty years hence—that your life must rest upon moral principles, or sooner or later it will fall to pieces with a crash. If you take heed to what I say, and accept those moral and spiritual principles which are revealed in the lives of all good men, and pre-eminently in the life and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if you will base your life upon them, then in after years you will look back and thank God that He gave you grace

to do so; but if you turn away, and laugh the light laugh of the world, and go forth after the heedless way of Samson, then, in days to come, in some dark prison-house of moral ruin, you will think of all that might have been, and feel that you would give your heart's best blood could you only undo the evil you have inflicted on yourself. Look into public life, into social life to-day; look into all history, and you will find it written everywhere, in letters of fire and of blood, that moral earnestness and purity and the fear of God are the only true and abiding foundations on which your life can stand.

The old Greek poets are said to have written their great tragedies for the purpose of purifying men by terror and pity: terror, lest others should perish in a like doom, and yet pity for those who fell, because it was seen how much there was of good in them. How different the issue might have been had they only followed the voice of wisdom and taken heed to their ways.

And such must be our feelings as we look on the closing scenes of Samson's life. He had ruined himself beyond repair for this world. He could never be the man he was; but in those lonely days and nights in the Philistine prison-house, we may well believe that he saw the folly and sin of his past life in their true colours. He saw how he had betrayed the sacred cause which God had committed to him. He saw how he had brought disaster and disgrace upon himself, and his heart was broken. Then he sought and found "that

last comfort that abides when all others are gone, the light of the Divine forgiveness and love." And thus slowly his hair began to grow again, and his former strength return; and we read the fearful story of his death—fearful, and yet sublime in its last act of heroic self-sacrifice. For when the lords of the Philistines gathered together to rejoice that their enemy had fallen, and that they could now crush the Israelites beneath their feet, they made a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, and their hearts grew merry with wine, and they sent for Samson to make them sport. And there, in the moment when you see the blind Hero brought in, amid the derisive laughter of his bitter foes, and placed between the two pillars, when he bows his mighty frame, and brings the whole temple with one fearful crash to the ground, burying himself and his country's enemies in one overwhelming ruin;—in that moment it is that you feel unspeakable pity for the man who with all his great gifts came to so tragic an end, and who yet was capable of such utter self-sacrifice. But when the ruin is completed, and all is silent again, and the broken walls and pillars lie heaped up in one vast ruin, and mingled with them the disfigured bodies of the slain, bare and ghastly in cold death, and the pale moon rises and looks down on the fearful scene, and the voices of the night winds sweep mournfully and sadly by, like the sobbing of unquiet spirits, then, blended with notes of pity and sadness for the dead Hero, there seems to rise out of that dread ruin one clear voice speaking in accents of utmost solemnity and warning,

and crying, "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

GEHAZI; OR, MODERN TEMPTATIONS UNDER OLD FORMS.

"Who does not cast
On the thronged pages of his memory's book
At times, a sad and half-reluctant look,
Regretful of the Past?"—WHITTIER.

"Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."—2 KINGS v. 26, 27.

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."—1 TIM. vi. 9, 10.

"The retrospect of life swarms with lost opportunities."

—SIR HENRY TAYLOR.

"Christian! seek not yet repose;
Hear thy guardian angel say,
Thou art in the midst of foes:
Watch and pray."

XI.

GEHAZI; OR, MODERN TEMPTATIONS UNDER OLD FORMS.

It was a sad sight. Gehazi went out from the presence of Elisha a leper, a moral wreck, a man branded and stamped by God as a failure and a reprobate. He had had his chance, and it was a splendid one. He might have been a great and a good man; but in the hour of temptation he miserably broke down, and he passes out of our sight to be numbered among those who have fallen short of their destiny. It was a sad picture. To see a man go wilfully to ruin, and persistently take the downward path, is the saddest sight on earth.

And yet that is what Gehazi did. It might have been otherwise with him. He was the servant and companion of the best man of his age; and as Elisha, the servant and friend of Elijah, succeeded his great master, and became clothed with his mantle of office and power, so a career equally distinguished and honourable was open to Gehazi. He might have become the successor of Elisha, and a great prophet from the Living God to his age and country. But he abused his trust; he would not take earnest heed to the things which he had heard and seen, and therefore when the crisis of temptation came—as it

comes sooner or later to every man—he wrecked his life. When he saw the money and the fine garments which his master had refused, he longed to possess them, he resolved that he would obtain them; and so he took the false step, spoke the false word, did the false deed, and was for ever after covered with shame and cast out as a failure. He could not occupy the place of honour and of power which might have been his.

I want you to think about this man, about his mistake and sin. I want you to think of what he might have and of what he did become. Gehazi's temptation and fall were typical of the special dangers of life to-day—of life in our great cities. We see in this old world story an example of what is going on around us now; and no incident cut out of the newspapers of the past week could be more direct in its warnings and suggestiveness.

Look firstly at what he might have been. A tender and venerable poet has sung regretfully of one who

> . . . "Took up her burden of life again,
> Saying only, 'It might have been.'"

And then he goes on to exclaim—

> "God pity them both! and pity us all,
> Who vainly the dreams of youth recall;
> For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
> The saddest are these—'It might have been!'"[1]

They are indeed sad words; and yet it is a distinguishing mark of man that he only can utter them. It is at once the sign of our nature's greatness, and of

[1] Whittier, "Maud Muller."

its failure under that greatness, that we are capable of remorse, of regret. Of all the creatures we know, man alone looks back and weeps tears of disappointment and shame over the mistakes of life. He alone feels pain that he is not what he might have been. The animals below us are haunted by no such regrets. They are not tormented with the vision of unrealised ideals, of lost opportunities, of false steps, of chances that are gone never to return.

There are those, of course, who have adopted a mechanical and materialistic theory of the universe, and who therefore declare that even in man this feeling is an illusion. He, they say, like the other creatures, cannot help being what he is. "Man is not free," exclaims one of these teachers: "he is as little responsible for his acts as the stone which wounds our head by obeying the law of gravitation: a crime is the necessary effect of a law of nature."[1] According to this philosophy, no man could have done otherwise than he has done. Opportunities are never really lost. There is no "might have been" in human life. But the conscience of every man denies that statement. All human thought and language and law and conduct proceed on the assumption that man is free, but that he is ever abusing his freedom—doing what he ought not to do, leaving undone what should have been done, taking the wrong path, losing fair opportunities that were within his reach.

And thus we are constantly looking back, with sad,

[1] Dankwardt.

torturing agony, and thinking of what might have been. We think of advantages lost, of time wasted, of talents neglected, of false steps taken, of temptations yielded to—all gone or done beyond recall—and we vainly think how different life would be, could we live it over again in the light of experience gained.

Consider what Gehazi might have been. It was his high privilege to be the servant and companion of the foremost prophet of Israel at that time. He lived in the light of the daily example of Elisha. Among the hills of northern Palestine, in crowded cities, on the lonely heights of Carmel, and amid all the varied events and scenes of those strange times, these two men were together. Again and again he saw that whilst Elisha was held in highest consideration in the Kingdom, and was the spiritual adviser of the great and powerful, and had wealth and honours within easy grasp, he maintained the prophetic simplicity of life, and had the utmost contempt for mere worldly greatness and display. Whenever Gehazi was tempted to falsehood, to low cunning, to the lust of gold, to attempt a short cut to fortune, to the sacrifice of honour and nobility, there was this great life of the prophet of God to remind him of his high calling, and to inspire him with the true spirit. No greater privilege could be conferred on any man of that age than to be admitted to daily and hourly intercourse with this powerful witness for God and righteousness. Of all the opportunities of life, the most precious are the society and friendship of a great and good man. Gehazi enjoyed that great

advantage. He had before him continually a splendid example and a noble career. It was expected that he would be a good man. There seemed no reason why he should not become a great prophet, and that when Elisha passed away he would succeed to his high and sacred office.

Every life has its opportunities and its possibilities. Do you ever ask yourself the question, as you read of some sad history of moral failure, or as you watch the steps of one who seems bent on going to ruin: "What might this man, this woman, have been?" There is some soul of goodness in all things evil. There is some hidden possibility of virtue and of happiness in all who take the downward path. There has been some opportunity for better things held out to all who have gone astray. What was the great refusal which these wrecked lives made?

And when you see a little child, do you never ask yourself: "What will this young immortal become?" Here is a bundle of hidden possibilities. The germs of good and evil are here. Both helps and hindrances will speedily surround this young soul: influences drawing it heavenward and hellward; opportunities which if seized will lead to virtue and success, which if lost will be followed by sin and shame. You fathers and mothers, do you never bend over your children and pray that God will make them wise to make the best of life? There was a time when Gehazi had life all before him, when a noble career was possible; but he neglected his chance, and instead of becoming a

great man in Israel he cowers away from our sight, "a leper as white as snow."

Every stage of life brings its opportunity and its temptation. Continually you are confronted with the two roads: the broad way to destruction, the narrow path to life. You must decide on which you will walk. Every day there is presented to us some opportunity, some advantage, some opening towards truth, goodness, success, heaven, which we may either improve or despise, but which will never occur again.

Now behind all these special opportunities of life stands the great economy of Redemption: the Divine Love, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the agency of the Holy Ghost, the means of grace; all given, instituted by Almighty God, that each one of us might live his best life, and find the true path, and rise superior to all that would tempt and destroy.

See how it was with Gehazi. Elisha stood as the expression of this fact of God's redeeming love and grace. He was God's witness to that age. He bore his testimony on behalf of the spiritual life, and against the sins of Israel. He declared God's message to the nation, and to every individual member of it. Gehazi came under the influence of Elisha. It was his great opportunity. He heard the word of God from the lips of this great prophet. The way of purity and righteousness was set before him in the daily life of his master. He heard the call to throw his life definitely on the side of God and goodness. He was continually reminded by all the acts of Elisha what

his life ought to be. And thus Gehazi, like each one of us, had his great chance. He saw what he could be: the ideal of his own life was there embodied and realised in the life of the man of God with whom he lived. He was surrounded by all these sacred influences that he might not take the downward path, that he might choose the good and live. The opportunity was given to him, and urged upon him. There was no mistake about it. The way to glory and honour and immortality and eternal life was pointed out, and he was called to walk in it. And what was the result? What was the issue of it all? It was this: when the crisis came, when the temptation reached Gehazi which would reveal definitely and finally which path he would choose, what he would do with life, on which side he elected to stand, in that solemn and awful moment Gehazi turned a traitor to his trust; he rejected the counsel of God against himself, he sold his birthright, he lied, he cheated, he deceived, he became a vagabond, "he went out from the presence of Elisha a *leper* as white as snow."

Let us see how it all happened. Why did Gehazi become a leper?

Naaman had been healed of his leprosy. Filled with the deepest gratitude, he begged Elisha to receive a present from him. But Elisha, having determined to maintain the prophetic simplicity of life and indifference to worldly advantages, replied: "As the Lord

liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it, but he refused."

Gehazi watched this interview, and said to himself: "What a fool my master has been to spare this rich Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he hath brought. Elisha is poor, I am poor: and here, when wealth is laid at our feet, my master despises it. He is nothing but an unpractical and foolish old man, standing on his dignity and his independence when he might enjoy the silver and the gold."

And so Gehazi ran after the chariot of the departing stranger; and as he ran, he invented a plausible lie. "My master hath sent me, saying, 'Behold, even now there be come to me from Mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'" The story sounded well. I dare say Gehazi congratulated himself on the sharpness of his wits. He was clever: no modern swindler could have done the thing more successfully.

"And Naaman said, 'Be content, take two talents.' And he urged him, and bound two talents (about £700) with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house; and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in and stood before his master."

So far it all was eminently successful. "And Elisha said unto him: 'Whence comest thou, Gehazi?'

And he said, 'Thy servant went no whither.' And Elisha said unto him, 'Went not mine heart with thee when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever.'"

Here we have a perfectly typical temptation and fall. What gives strength to a temptation is the correspondence there is in it to the nature of the man on whom it falls. The sin involved in yielding to it often consists in the indulgence of some desire, good and right in itself, but satisfied in a wrong way and at a wrong time. A temptation is like an acid applied to some chemical compound; it tests it, it reveals a quality or substance hidden and secret before. A temptation is only full of power when it holds a relation to what is in the man. There are forms of temptation that do not touch one man, although they are all but irresistible to another.

Gehazi saw this display of wealth and raiment: he saw it all offered to his master and refused. And instantly the sight of that money and those garments touched a secret place in his soul, and set him longing for riches and fine clothes, as he had probably never longed before. Up to that hour there may have been secret cravings for the things which secure homage and influence and social distinction; but they were more or less controlled. But the display of those splendid

new garments, and those bags of money, all offered to Elisha, and all so decisively refused, awakened a fierce passion in his soul, it set on fire desires of which he had never been so fully conscious before. The very indifference of his master made the blood leap in his veins. Elisha seemed so absurd, so unreasonable; and Gehazi said to himself, as many others have done since: "I must have that money; I must have those fine garments. I will secure them honestly if I can; but if not, I will obtain them by lying and craft."

Now the desire to possess money and fine raiment, to own and enjoy all those things which imply social advancement and prosperity and comfort, is not wrong. These things are not to be despised. The more wealth there is in the hands of good and wise men, the better. At the same time never forget that bags of gold and silver, and changes of raiment, are not everything, are not the chief things. Many an aching heart has been hidden beneath fine clothes. Many a lordly possessor of oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, would have gladly exchanged lots with his poorest day labourer. The modern pursuit of wealth, as though it were the chief end of man, is a sordid and insane pursuit. It foolishly over-estimates the good wealth will do. Still I say that when due regard is given to higher and nobler things; when a man knows how to use his wealth rightly, and to keep it in its proper place; when he has learned to place a higher value on knowledge and love and virtue and the fear of God than on silver and gold, then the delight in beautiful raiment and

worldly possessions is not wrong, and the desire for these things is no sin.

Gehazi felt that desire. The sight of those precious things cast at the feet of Elisha, and all sternly refused, awakened in his heart a passionate longing for them. And then came the temptation: "Why should I not obtain possession of them? This old Syrian, just cured of his loathsome disease, can spare them. He has more than enough. He will return home the happier to think that he has repaid Elisha. No one will suffer. No one will be the poorer. No one will know." Thus the man dallied and trifled, for a moment, with the temptation, and immediately it became too strong for him. It blinded his conscience, his regard for truth, his own and his master's honour; and, swept forward by his desires, like a floating branch on the rushing stream, he ran after Naaman to lie, to deceive, to bring everlasting ruin and disgrace upon himself and his name. Amid this wild storm of greed, and lust for gold and for fine clothes, he made shipwreck of his life, and was cast aside as a vagabond, and a reprobate before God. He had a splendid chance; it might have been all so different with him; but when the day came for him to be tried, to be put to the proof, he snapt and broke like a useless tool, and down upon him came the swift and awful punishment of the liar and the thief. The words of terrible denunciation and of dreadful doom from the lips of Elisha seem to hiss and burn upon him like tongues of fire: "The leprosy of Naaman cleave unto thee;" and, like a shrivelled and burnt-out creature of

doom, "he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow."

And so the story ends. We hear of this man once or twice again; but no light is thrown upon his after character. And yet it is all so pitiful. It might have turned out so differently. Gehazi was clever, he was quick-witted, he was energetic, he was the friend and servant of a great and good man; he might himself have been a great man and a good one. But he did not make the best of his opportunities. This temptation came suddenly and unexpectedly, as temptations generally do. It was all over in an hour, and he had fallen from respect and honour into ruin and disgrace; but the trial would not have worked out in that fatal and overwhelming way had there not been inward weakness and rottenness. Gehazi had not been growing silently into a good man in the service of Elisha. He was, like Judas, the betrayer, very near to the light and the truth, in daily intercourse with one who could have saved him; but it was doing him no good; and when the temptation came, he fell, without a struggle, down into shameful ruin.

And all this is representative and typical. Gehazi is not alone. Let his opportunities, his bright prospects, his splendid chances, remind you of yours. God never starts a soul on the road of life with a curse. Every one has his chance; for every one a bright career is open. Some have greater opportunities than others, but none start life doomed. You must not say, "There is no opening for me; I have no chance." For every

one there is the possibility of union with Christ, the joy of being a child of God. For every one there is the possibility of an immortal crown and a home in heaven. Take heed that you do not miss your chance. Be on your guard against the downward path. Be wise, and claim your privileges. Be sure that, like Gehazi, the day will come when you will be put to proof. You may not know it; you may think very lightly of it: but with every one there is a day or days in which the soul is tested, and the discovery is made that it is worthy of the Divine privilege, or must be cast aside. It will come to you; it may meet you as it met Gehazi, and as it meets so many in this generation, in the form of a temptation to barter away the soul for gold; to sell the conscience for silver and changes of raiment. Money, society, position, worldly display —these are pre-eminently the temptations of this age; and should they come to you, take heed how you meet them. Beware of the temptations of life. Ask yourself "what it shall profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." Take care to grasp the true rewards and honours of life. Seek to live well, to live nobly, to live for life's highest ends; and then, when the curtain falls, you will be found standing upon the Eternal Rock, and you will hear the Great Master say, "Well done: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

JOSEPH; OR, THE MORAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN LIFE.

"For right is right, since God is God;
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty;
To falter would be sin."—F. W. FABER.

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man." —GEN. xxxix. 2.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way."—PS. xxxvii. 23.

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."—JOSHUA i. 8.

> "No longer on the golden-fretted sands,
> Where many a shallow tide abortive chafes,
> Mayst thou delay; life onward sweeping blends
> With far-off heaven: the dauntless one who braves
> The perilous flood with calm unswerving hands,
> The elements sustain: cleave thou the waves."
>
> —MATHILDE BLIND.

XII.

JOSEPH; OR, THE MORAL CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS IN LIFE.

JOSEPH was the last of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, and the most perfect embodiment of their spirit and history. He had the most brilliant career. No eager youth can read the story of his life without rising the better for its perusal; and, if he has a spark of ambition in him to make the best of his own life, it will be kindled to a mighty flame. There are lives more full of tragic wonder, and of intellectual and moral struggles, but none more beautiful. The career of David goes beyond that of Joseph in its steady progress, its splendour, and ideal development; but if David possessed higher endowments of mind and heart, so also he possessed darker passions. If the golden threads were woven more numerously into the texture of his life, so also were the black threads of crime and guilt.

The story of Joseph takes us back to the grey dawn of the world's history, four thousand years ago. Life had not then the complications and problems which it has to-day. And yet it was in all its fundamental elements the same; the same passions, temptations,

dangers, sources of strength. Men had then essentially the same battle to fight which we wage; they suffered the same defeats, and obtained the same victories.

This is especially true of the life of Joseph. You could transfer all its leading features to this Nineteenth Christian Century, and be guilty of no anachronism. You see him within his father's tent, the favourite child, decorated unwisely in a coat of many colours, surrounded by coarse and jealous brethren, yet "nourishing a youth sublime" with dreams of future greatness. The scene shifts, and you see him sold into Egypt, far away from his father's tents and the sheep pastures. He is a slave in the house of Potiphar, but the Lord is with him, and he becomes overseer of the house. Again the scene changes, and you behold him terribly tempted, falsely accused, thrust into prison; and time rolls on, and his dreams of greatness seem far enough from being realised. And then again fortune's wheel turns, and he is suddenly transferred from prison to the palace of Pharaoh, becomes the King's chief adviser and ruler of Egypt, and from that point his life is one of unbroken prosperity, and his golden dreams of greatness are more than realised.

Now, what has this life to say to us? At first it seems to stand afar off in an atmosphere of wonder and glory. It is like a fascinating story from "The Arabian Nights;" and yet, when we look below the surface, we find that in all important respects it is just the life which we to-day are called to live. Many a man now living who has slowly struggled up from poverty

and obscurity, through long years of silent effort and suffering and temptation, to conspicuous honour and power, knows that Joseph's life has not lost its lessons and its charm. He is conscious that he has had the same battle to fight, the same temptations to endure, and has been sustained by the same sources of strength. In Joseph's life we see the eternal moral conditions of prosperity. We see exhibited in a large and luminous way those principles which must be embedded in every noble and successful career. His life is full of instruction for all who would attain to real greatness and prosperity. I will point out some of these eternal moral conditions of a successful life.

And, firstly, no life can be truly great without a Noble Ideal. Every distinguished man has been a dreamer, and his dreams have been the inspiration of his life. It was so with Joseph. He dreamt that he saw his brother's sheaves of corn making obeisance to his sheaf, and the sun and moon and stars bowing down before him; and the visions only expressed his youthful consciousness that he was called to live a nobler life than that which he witnessed in the gross, idle, dissolute habits of his brethren. "These dreams derived not only their imagery, but their substance, from his waking thoughts."[1] They were "significant, because they embodied in a picturesque form the concentrated essence" of his daily thoughts and character.

A steady and noble ideal of life is the first moral

[1] Dr. Marcus Dods on Genesis.

condition of success. It represents your capacity for progress. To advance, you must have an ideal far beyond anything you have yet reached; and to attain it must become your daily passion and endeavour.

That dream or ideal of life which haunts the mind by day and night almost always foreshadows the destiny. "Our wishes are a forefeeling of our capabilities." In a general way it will be found true that those men and women who have achieved great things have had, like Joseph, in their early years, some mysterious foreshadowing of life, which perhaps they did not understand at the time, but which their after career has only more or less inadequately realised. "In looking back," says one who has often been called a modern prophet, "to the castles of earliest boyhood, we may see that they were not wholly built of air,—that part of the material of which they were composed was derived from a deep quarry in ourselves,—that in the form of their architecture were shadowed out the tendencies, the professions, the schemes of after years." [1]

And so I believe that most men who will glance thoughtfully back over their past years will recognise a certain drift, tendency, predominant wish, that has run like a golden thread through all the shifting scenes and contradictory purposes of their lives, and bound them together and made them one. "The Child is father of the Man." Going back to their earliest recollections they can recall pictures of life that seemed to float before them out of the darkness, and voices

[1] Maurice: "Patriarchs and Lawgivers."

that called to them, saying, "Here is the vision of your life: this is what you may become by the grace of God." As the years have passed, those voices may have been less often heard, and the visions may have come and gone, like the moon behind passing clouds; yet, still, looking back, the man of years sees that these ideals have not been wholly lost, or wholly unrealised. They have had their influence in his career, and led him unconsciously on. Weary eyes may look out from beneath wrinkled brows, and smile sadly as they compare the bright and gorgeous colours of the early dreams with the sober realities of life's achievements, and yet they cannot but recognise that there was a mysterious prophecy of the subsequent life in them, and that they have had a profound influence in shaping that life.

Thus it was with Joseph. He did not put his dreams aside as an idle fancy. So far as they were noble, pure, elevating, they came from God, and he recognised them as coming from Him. They encouraged him through long years of suffering and waiting. God had given him that ideal of what his life should be, and would help him to realise it. Here, then, you have the first moral condition of prosperity and progress—a noble ideal of life; a determination that, let your life be cast where it may, that however the outward currents may shift and change, that let success come early or come late, you will live your best, your strongest, your noblest life, and that to the end you will remain true to your youthful visions and inspirations.

The next point I notice is Joseph's Capacity for

Patient Suffering and Endurance. He had a splendid vision, but it was only fulfilled after long years of suffering and waiting. We follow the drama of his life with profound interest. At the very beginning he was hated by his brethren, and, when they found him alone, they resolved to kill him. That idea discarded, through the intercession of Reuben, he was cast into an empty water cistern, "left to die the most appalling of deaths, under the ground, sinking in mire, his flesh creeping at the touch of unseen slimy creatures, in darkness alone." Then he was removed from the pit, and sold as a slave into Egypt. There seemed little chance of his brilliant dreams ever being realised; and still less so, when, after enduring a fearful temptation, he was falsely accused and cast into prison. He was seventeen years old when his brothers sold him, and at thirty he was still a prisoner in a loathsome Egyptian dungeon. Think of that, you who complain of the slowness of your advancement, and who are discouraged because your first attempts to climb the ladder do not succeed. For thirteen years he endured that heavy trial of his patience and courage, and faith in God. All through those long, terrible years his heart never failed him. No expression of bitterness, no rancorous outburst of misanthropy ever fell from his lips. He met all bravely, with calm, meek, dignified forbearance. Only once does he refer to his wretchedness, and then it is to his fellow-prisoner, the butler, whose speedy restoration he had foretold: "But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto

me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house; for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." Thus he suffered until deliverance came; and from his lips you hear no sentimental wailing over the cruelty of his brothers, the hardness of his fate, the falseness of friendship, or the ingratitude of the world. His heart was not soured.

Here, then, we have a further condition of prosperity. How many fail because they cannot wait patiently until success comes! Unless their bright ideal is realised at once, they give it up; they grow bitter, resentful, careless; they throw up the race, or, worse still, they try a short cut to success. They enter upon dishonourable schemes; they adopt plans which end in their ruin. And therefore I say, never fear to aspire; and yet be patient, be trustful, be ready to wait and to suffer. Do not allow ingratitude, suspicion, selfishness, misrepresentation to spoil your life.

> "Oh, fear not in a world like this,
> And thou shalt know ere long;
> Know how sublime a thing it is,
> To suffer and be strong."

You will recognise as another moral condition of Joseph's prosperity his Superiority to the Temptations of Lust and Passion. Perhaps you have read Edna Lyall's admirable novel called "In the Golden Days." You will remember that the last assault made upon the hero, Hugh Wharncliffe, in the hope of destroying

his integrity, was an attack made upon his chastity. Imprisonment, threats, promises, starvation, torture, public flogging at the cart's tail, until that young and delicate body was taken up for dead, had been tried in vain. Then, as a last temptation, an infamous Duchess sent one of her fair attendants into his dungeon, where, under the pretence of nursing him and healing his wounds, she was, by all the fascinations of youthful beauty, and by all the witchery of smiles and beguiling arts, to break down that noble nature, and betray it to its fall. But, as in the case of Joseph in Egypt, the temptation was powerless to accomplish its end.

There in the house of Potiphar the temptation came to Joseph, presented, amid all the arts and blandishments and soft luxuriousness of an Egyptian noble house, to a poor, youthful, inexperienced Hebrew, stolen from his far-off home among the sheepfolds, and sold into slavery. There in that hour of tremendous temptation and crisis, the whole life of Joseph hung upon the decision of a moment; and without dallying with it for one fatal instant, he passed safely through it when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And then when the sinful love was powerless to break down inflexible purity, it turned to fiendish malignity and hatred; and Joseph, treacherously and cruelly accused, was hurried off to prison.

Now every man finds in himself two natures: one gross and animal, the other spiritual and noble. One allies him to the beast that perisheth, and the other to the angels of God, and God Himself. And in some form

or other this question comes up to be settled in every life: "Shall the soul or the body be king? Are conscience and intelligence to rule, or the animal passions and lusts?" And there is only one way in which every man who would live a noble and successful life can decide those questions. At all costs, and in spite of all temptations, the body and its appetites must obey the soul. Even although a man should have to rot in a prison-house all his days, he must not forswear his conscience. It is an absolute condition of all true greatness that a man must be steered by the principles of temperance and chastity.

Far back in the Middle Ages you know there was a beautiful and radiant institution called Chivalry. It had its romantic and evil side; but there was also a precious and elevating element in it. In an age of wild passions, and coarse brutality, and fierce animal lusts, it fostered a fine and stately type of manhood, a gentle courtesy towards womanhood, and stainless purity. The true knight was pure, gentle, self-sacrificing, brave.

His mission was—

> "To ride abroad, redressing human wrongs;
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it;
> To honour his own word as if his God's;
> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity;
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,
> Until they won her; for indeed I knew
> Of no more subtle master under heaven
> Than is the maiden passion for a maid—
> Not only to keep down the base in man,

> But teach high thought, and amiable words,
> And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
> And love of truth, and all that makes a man."[1]

The forms of that old chivalry have passed away, but the principle remains. If you would live a true and noble life you must live a chaste life. No one can shield you from temptation. You possibly live where vice presents itself before you every day and every night, and where it has exhausted every art to make itself beautiful and seductive. You cannot remain ignorant of its presence. But just as yonder lily blooms in pure virgin whiteness, unstained by the black earth out of which it springs, so may you live pure and unspotted amid all the moral defilements of both city and country. Be assured of this, that the vicious, lustful man is a cursed man. He dishonours the very name of manhood. He is a foul stain on creation; a vile and poisonous viper; a cruel, heartless fiend from whom you should shrink with horror. Settle it with yourself and with God, once and for ever, that passion shall not be your master, and that, come what may, you will through all your days "wear the white flower of a blameless life."

I would have you notice, last of all, the moral elements of Simplicity and Magnanimity in Joseph. You see the noble honesty and greatness of the man when, amid all the splendours of his lofty position, he acknowledges his poor old father and his rough shepherd brethren, even although a shepherd was an abomina-

[1] Tennyson's "Idylls of the King."—*Guinevere.*

tion to the Egyptians. Joseph was prosperous, but he remained in heart simple and uncorrupted. He had contracted a brilliant alliance by marrying into one of the noblest families of Egypt; he was surrounded by courtly friends: only in the throne was Pharaoh the greater, and yet Joseph put on no airs of superiority —he made no vulgar show. In the midst of all his greatness he retained his old affection for his venerable and lowly shepherd father, and for his uncultivated brothers, and he was ready in a moment to acknowledge them in the presence of Pharaoh and his court. That was true greatness; the greatness so conscious of its own strength, so firmly grounded in the eternal realities of life that it can afford to smile with pity on all vulgar parade and vain display. He bore a simple, unsophisticated heart, unspoiled by all the pomps of the Egyptian court, and was so essentially great and good that he was absolutely free from unreality. A lesser man would have tried to hide his humble origin: he would have passed his brethren by, and never made himself known to them; or he would have done it secretly, and would have taken care to keep them and his poor old father out of the sight of his courtly friends. Many a man has turned out a failure because, with his first step upwards, he has grown giddy. Not so with Joseph in Egypt. He wore all his grandeur carelessly; he accepted the magnificence of his great position as a matter of course; he filled the highest position in the land with ease and grace. He never thought of dropping his poor relations and connections,

as many would have done, but cherished all his old love for home and for the plain folk among whom he was reared; and in so doing he showed the simplicity of real greatness.

So with his magnanimity. He bore no malice towards his brethren, but loved them with a noble love. He was ready to forgive them all their unkindness towards himself, and yet his was not a weak maudlin compassion. He made them feel and see that they had tried to do him a great wrong. He brought home to them a sense of their guilt, and then he freely forgave them. There are some people who are too ready to forgive: they show by their quick and ready forgetfulness of a wrong that they have no clear moral discernment. Hence, when their forgiveness does come, it signifies nothing, and is therefore worth nothing. Joseph had a large, deep, thoughtful heart, free from all revenge, malice, meanness, treachery. He could love deeply and strongly; he could forgive fully and perfectly, because his life rested in the simplicity of truth and righteousness.

And thus we see in the life of this venerable patriarch the moral conditions of true prosperity in life, the steps of that ladder up which those must pass who would attain to all real nobleness, all worthy success in this world. At the foot there is aspiration; for he who would climb must have an ideal. And then follow patient endurance and purity and simplicity and magnanimity. And then shall I say that beyond them all is the fear of God? or rather shall I not say that

faith in God is the support and base of the whole, and binds all other virtues together, and gives them strength and stability? Certainly it was the foundation of Joseph's life, and the support and inspiration of his whole career. He believed in God, loved Him and served Him. That faith sustained him through all his long years of suffering and waiting, and it was his defence in the hour of temptation. And, with all the emphasis I can command, I would beg of you to believe that there is no enduring greatness for you apart from such faith in God and obedience to His Holy Will.

I have set before you, my friend, these moral elements in the life of this ancient patriarch. Was I not right in saying that no modern life could be more full of practical lessons for the Modern Disciple than this life is; and will you not take it, and study it, until you become inspired by it? Will you not take this noble, heroic, beautiful life, and let it shine before you as a splendid ideal of what your life may be? Will you not say to-day: "God being my helper, I will live the strongest, noblest, truest life which is possible for me in this world"? Will you not resolve that no temptations or hindrances or discouragements shall keep you from the right path? That you will take courage, and press forward, and climb upward, that so you may at last be numbered among God's noble ones? Christ is the Great Leader and Saviour, and He is ready to aid you, and commands you to trust Him and follow Him. It is lives such as I have described that are wanted to-day, and are wanted here.

A noble, manly, pure life is the grandest sight on earth; and if you will live according to the principles which guided this patriarch of old, your life, whether you be rich or poor, whether you fill a great place in the world or a small one, will, in the truest sense of the word, be a successful life, and it will be said of you as of Joseph: "And the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man."

IS SAUL AMONG THE PROPHETS?

"For such a sunken soul what room in Heaven?
For such a soaring soul what place in Hell?
Can these desires be damned, these doings shriven,
Or in some lone mid-region must he dwell
For ever? Lo! God sitteth with the seven
Stars in His hand, and shall not He judge well?"

—J. A. NOBLE.

"Therefore it became a proverb, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'"—1 SAM. x. 12.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."—EPH. iv. 30.

"It was out of the Hero's power to abandon in his inmost heart what he had in earlier times acknowledged as his better self."

—EWALD on *The Fall of Saul*, "History of Israel."

"Oh! we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments
Sure, though seldom, are denied us,
When the Spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way
To its triumph or undoing."

XIII.

IS SAUL AMONG THE PROPHETS?

"Is Saul also among the prophets?" The question was twice asked. Once at the beginning of Saul's career, in the early Sunrise, when the golden promise of his life first caught the eyes of men; and then again years afterwards, when the morning of hope had sunk into the Midnight of despair, and the life of the great King of Israel was hastening, amid black thunder-clouds and fierce lightning-flashes, to its dark and tragic close.

On the first occasion the question expressed the natural surprise of those who only knew Saul as the son of Kish, the Benjamite, to find him in the company of the prophets, inspired with lofty religious enthusiasm, and transfigured with an unexpected splendour. And, on the second occasion, it expressed even greater wonder that a man, so long held captive by fierce passions, and who seemed hurrying headlong to ruin, could yet be touched, even in the eleventh hour, by the appeals of the higher life. In each case the inquiry was suggested by Saul's strange capacity for a noble career; and it is the light which the question thus throws, not only on the character of the first King of Israel, but on much

that takes place in our own lives, which makes it so worthy of our consideration. It suggests a message to two classes: those who stand in the early Sunrise of Life's hope and promise, and those who lie prostrate in the Midnight of despair.

The two occasions on which the inquiry was made first claim our notice.

The Sacred Narrative distinctly asserts that Saul's investiture with the kingly office involved a crisis in his inner, no less than in his outer, life. Up to the hour of his call to that exalted position he was remarkable neither in character nor history. He was distinguished only for his great height and good looks. No dreams of a great vocation had troubled him: no one had pointed him out as a kingly man.

But a very commonplace event led him one day to the prophet Samuel. It is told with the utmost simplicity, and suggests the reflection that a man's whole career often seems to turn upon a trifle. Every one can probably recall events which, when they happened, wore the most ordinary and every-day look—just a careless glance at the newspaper, a chance visit to a particular neighbourhood, two young people meeting together for an hour; but on these simple incidents a life's history may hang.

Saul had gone to look for his father's asses, and, after a vain search for three days, at the suggestion of his servant he sought the advice of Samuel, "the honourable man, the man of God, whose word would surely come to pass, and who peradventure would tell

them which way to go." As they ascend the hill to the city where the prophet dwells, they meet young maidens going to draw water, who tell them to make haste if they would see the prophet, for there was a sacrifice that day in the High Place, and Samuel would go to bless the feast. The Venerable Seer, divinely guided, recognises at once in Saul Israel's future King, and addresses him with the words: "On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on thy father's house?" Saul replies, with perfect modesty: "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?" "And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit down in the chiefest place among them that were bidden."

Here, in a few simple touches, is a vivid picture. There is no straining after effect, no hint that Saul was then approaching a great crisis in his life. It looks like an accident. Yet all is living and dramatic.

The next day Samuel anointed Saul King of Israel, and sent him home, informing him what would happen on the journey. He would meet two men by Rachel's sepulchre, who would tell him that his father's asses were found. In the plain of Tabor he would meet three men going up to God, to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. They would salute him, and give him two loaves of bread. After

that he would come to the hill of God, where was the garrison of the Philistines. "And it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of the prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man."

And so it came to pass. "And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart." The old commonplace life was gone. The sun had broken through the clouds that obscured it. Saul walked the old paths, and gazed on the old scenes; but another light shone around him, for he himself was a new man. The mysterious words of the Venerable Seer, his more wonderful conduct, the strange things that had happened, moved Saul to the utmost depths of his nature. Until then, his life had been conventional and prosaic. He had been touched with no great enthusiasms, stirred with no lofty aims; but now he is conscious of desires and thoughts altogether new. He realises the sacredness and awfulness of life. He feels that he has a work to do. The morning dawn of new hope has risen within him, and there is a glory in earth and heaven, and in all common things, which he had never seen before. All the deeper fountains of his being are unsealed. God had given him another heart.

When therefore he met the company of the prophets

moving in solemn, mystic order, and heard their strains of sacred music and poetry, a divine inspiration came upon him which he could not, and dared not, resist. He was carried away with it. All the pent-up forces of his nature broke out. "The Spirit of God came upon him," and, uniting himself with the sacred choir, he prophesied among the prophets. And then those who had only known him before as an ordinary, commonplace man, looked on with astonishment. Saul was transfigured. He was a greater and a nobler man than they had supposed. And they said: "What is this that has come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

All this, no doubt, looks very wonderful; but it is wonderful because the Bible is the most natural and philosophical of books, so that, instead of explaining away the deepest facts of life, it carries us at once to their principles and causes. Do we not also sometimes see men and women thus suddenly changed, passing out of a dull, prosaic, mechanical existence into the light and joy of new hope and energy, and moral thoughtfulness and power? Have you never seen among your companions and friends those who had previously appeared utterly commonplace and conventional suddenly inspired with wonderful strength and grace and nobility of character? The occasion of the change may have been different in each case —a great sorrow, a new affection, the conviction of a special calling in life, the direct recognition of the awful claims of Christ; but, whatever the immediate

cause, it has touched unknown springs, and clothed the life with new moral beauty and power. And those thus changed have seemed for the first time to be their true selves, as though some artificial crust had fallen off the character, and the real man or woman been disclosed. And, as you have witnessed the beautiful transformation, you have said: "What! are these also among the prophets? Has the bright and morning Star risen upon their lives, and shown them that life is a sacred and noble trust?" Such people may sometimes prove disappointing in the end, as Saul did. The new splendour may fade away, as golden sunsets die away into midnight darkness; but yet it has indicated what they might be, what God wishes them to become. It has been a revelation of secret power, of the glorious possibilities of their lives. Such, then, was the significance of the first occasion when the question was asked: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Years roll on in the life of Saul—years of disaster, mistake, and rebellion; years in which the early splendour is quenched in gloom; and when the inquiry is made again, Saul is standing in the midnight darkness of despair. Like so many who have raised great expectations, Saul did not fulfil the promise of his youth. He forgot the Lord and Teacher who had imparted to him that new life, who had awakened those noble desires and thoughts, who claimed his life-long obedience and love; and therefore he slowly fell

from the height to which he had been raised—black thunder-clouds swept across the fair sky. He became feeble, reckless, tyrannical, the victim of an accusing conscience, the subject of terrible fits of jealousy and suspicion, and his life ended, at last, in a frenzy of madness and despair. We need not follow every step of his downward career, but there are points we must notice.

The truth Saul learned at his conversion—for that much-abused word best expresses the experience we have just considered—was one true for all time; it concerns you as vitally as it concerned him. Saul had discovered that he could be a good and great man only by trusting and obeying that Holy Spirit which had apprehended him. Apart from God, he would become a feeble and paltry creature. The Holy Spirit alone could save him from becoming the sport of outward accident and inward passion; God only could make his life noble, orderly, progressive. But that great truth he forgot. He lost his sense of responsibility to God. He became indifferent to law. He early manifested the seeds of superstition and hypocrisy. He showed himself weak and foolish, and the slave of whatever influence was exerted over him for the moment. And therefore we read that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." He was tormented with an accusing conscience, and filled with foreboding and dread. That accusing conscience which, as Hamlet says, "makes cowards of us all," terrified and tormented him. There was much

bodily and mental disease associated with this moral disorder; and the servants of Saul, who little understood the deeper causes of their master's madness, sent for David to sooth him with his harp; and the music had its effect. It calmed the unhappy King as it has done thousands since. But Saul needed something more. It could not lift the black cloud away; it could not bring back his lost self.

And therefore we are prepared to see him sink lower still. Haunted with evil thoughts, seeing everything in a false light, suffering from an inward disorder that poisoned all the springs of his being, he became the victim of a gnawing suspicion and hatred of David and of every one about him. He believed they were plotting his ruin. The hatred and jealousy grew until they became an uncontrollable frenzy of madness, urging him to acts of meanest treachery and murder. How far physical and mental disease were accountable for his condition, and how far it was a case of moral responsibility, we leave to Him who can judge more righteously and mercifully than we can do. And yet it is right for us to take the warning for ourselves, conveyed in the following words: "When persons are said to have gone insane, or to have committed suicide from mental overwork, the truth in nine cases out of ten, if not in all cases, is, that anxieties and apprehensions, disappointed ambition, envies and jealousies, the wounds of exaggerated self-love, or similar heartaches, have been the real causes of this breakdown." [1]

[1] Dr. Henry Maudsley: "Responsibility in Mental Disease."

Saul was now mad with suspicion and jealousy and hatred. He had forgotten the Loving and Righteous Lord who in happier days had chosen him to be King over Israel. He had grieved the Holy Spirit, which in years gone by, had inspired him with all generous and noble thoughts. He had indulged in hateful passions until they had completely mastered him, and were plunging him headlong to ruin. And yet, in the midst of that terrible darkness and madness and moral derangement, there were momentary flashes of returning consciousness, brief sunny beams of light, that showed that, beneath all these strange and awful distortions of his mind, there was a nobler and truer self not utterly dead. Like a dismantled and helpless wreck, over which wild and pitiless storms rage, Saul showed, even in his ruin, what he might and ought to have been. To the last it was seen that the Holy Spirit had not utterly deserted him. Again and again he sought David's life, and again and again he relented and sought reconciliation. And it was in connection with those terrible scenes of madness and murderous fury that the question was heard for the second time: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

David had escaped out of his hands, and had found a refuge with Samuel. Saul heard of his hiding-place, and commanded his messengers to seize him. But when they approached the holy place, and beheld the choir of prophets, and heard their sacred and solemn music, they were seized with the spirit of the Sanctuary

—a Divine inspiration seemed to come upon them—and, instead of laying hands on David, they joined in the sacred service. Three times Saul sent with the like result, and at last he went himself; but as he came near and heard the sacred words, so long forgotten, as he beheld the choir of prophets among whom, in happier days, he had once stood, the spirit of the once loved Holy Place came over him again, all the better nature of the ruined King returned, the Spirit of God came upon him as of yore, and he prophesied. The Holy Spirit could not, it is true, any longer reveal itself as a calm and blessed and orderly power. Saul's prophecies were no longer the utterances of joy and hope, as when he sung in the early sunrise of life, but were like mournful night winds as they sweep in fitful and melancholy gusts among the leafless trees of winter and among the deserted and fallen ruins of a once noble house; and yet they bore witness that the better self was not utterly destroyed, that capacities for goodness were still in him, and that the sun might again shine upon him, if not with summer brightness and strength, yet with a mild and chastened splendour. Even in his fall and ruin there were glimpses of hope and promise; and when even the last clouds were gathering thick around him, the cry was heard again: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Now I find in the life of Saul two great living lessons, as much needed in the midst of our modern

life as in any period of the world's history—a lesson of warning for those who stand in the early sunrise of hope and promise; a lesson of encouragement for those who stand in the midnight blackness of despair.

We have seen that Saul's experience was not exceptional when it was said that "God gave him another heart." There are periods in the lives of most people, even of the most dull and worldly, when they have dreams of better things, when they hear the voices of the prophets coming with their harp and tabret and pipe down the hill, when they join the inspired company and catch its strains. There are occasions when an unexpected grace and energy break forth from even ordinary people, which surprise their most intimate friends, and compel the question: "What! are they also among the prophets? Have they caught the spirit of the great and good, and parted with all mean and unhallowed thoughts of life?" Thank God for all such holy seasons and visitations. They are a prophecy of what life may be. They are the sunrises of the soul, the golden promises of life flung upon our path; they are—

> "The fountain light of all our day,
> The Master light of all our seeing."

Make the most, then, of such experiences. They bring a new inspiration and joy. Then God is near, and the heart is responsive and tender. Then the prospects of life brighten, and friends speak confidently and hopefully. Then the golden vision of God's heroes,

prophets, martyrs, saints, rises before you, and they beckon you to join that consecrated host; and you long to prove worthy of a place among those who have spoken wise words, thought great thoughts, and wrought noble deeds. Well may you cherish such sacred visitations. You may not be always able to retain the glowing feeling; the bright visions may fade and pass away, but they have given you a new insight into your life and its possibilities. And when the vision is gone, and the sacred voices are silent, and the glowing feeling has all died down, the tasks and duties to which they have called you will remain, and may be fulfilled, for—

> "Tasks in hours of insight willed
> May be in hours of gloom fulfilled."

But for all that you must not over-estimate the significance of these bright hours. Saul's life affords solemn warning. Many a gallant ship which swept gracefully from the harbour on its outward voyage, followed by the fondest hopes and wishes of those on land, has never returned home again; but, overtaken by storms and disasters, has gone upon the rocks, or foundered in the night, or been cast on unknown shores. Many a youthful soldier who has buckled on his armour, and gone forth vowing to fight nobly, has forgotten his promises, and become a traitor, and fallen in shameful disgrace. Life is full of dangers. The conflict is very hard. The work is not done when the first bright vision dawns upon you. Like Saul, you are called to a great trust and an arduous enterprise.

Temptations will befall you in all subtle and terrible ways. Hardships must be endured. You may have years of coldness and darkness, when friends will be few and your purposes will be thwarted and baffled, and when, like Israel of old, you will grow weary of the struggle, and would gladly forego all the glories of the Promised Land for the carnal satisfactions of Egypt. Life is not a simple problem. Success and honour and victory may be yours; but I warn you, my friend, that they are hard to win. There is a terrible battle to be fought with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Remember then that the Holy Spirit has apprehended you; that obedience, reverence, trust, are what God demands of you; and refuse to become the victim of dark, evil passions, and determine, at all costs, to remain faithful to God and duty: so will you find that the path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day.

But the life of King Saul has in it also a message of hope. I refer to the fact that, right down to the close of his disastrous career, we see the indications that God had not utterly forsaken him. Amid all the sin and passion of his life, he could not wholly abandon his better self. He felt that God and truth and righteousness were a necessity to him. In his heart of hearts he yearned after them. I have already pointed this out. The question: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" arose the second time, because it was seen that to the last there remained a consciousness of better things, a hidden tenderness, a capacity for

goodness and love and purity, which all those shameful distortions of his mind could not utterly destroy. It was so to the end of his life. You see it even in that last act on the night before his tragic death, when he resorted to the witch of Endor, in the hope that she could put him into communication with the spirit of his departed friend, the prophet Samuel. In that strange act you see how far he had sunk from the bright promise of the days when he stood among the prophets and shared their inspiration. And yet, in that moral confusion which led him to seek a message from the Righteous and Holy God by means of a sorceress and deceiver, we discover a real desire to know the mind of God, a consciousness of his own helplessness and misery, and a longing to speak once more with the Venerable Friend and Guide of his youth—to see once again the face of him who had so often warned him, but whose advice he had rejected. There is, to my mind, a pathos and a sadness in that awful midnight scene in the old sorceress' cave, among the dark lonely hills, that is past expression. The great King of Israel, haggard, hopeless, almost mad, falls down before what he believes to be the spirit of Samuel, and hears the declaration of his own doom on the coming day. And when, on the morrow, the tragic end came on the heights of Mount Gilboa, when Israel fled before the foe, and the man whom in happier days Samuel had anointed King, having beheld his soldiers desert him, his own sons slain, fled himself before the face of the Philistine, a wounded and a dying man,

then all harsh judgments should be hushed in the silence of a fearful pity; and when at last we seem to see him, as the red and lurid sun goes down, a forsaken and lonely and ruined King, who falls upon his own drawn sword and dies, then compassion and tenderness and sadness at the thought of all he might have been fill the heart, and hands of mercy and sorrow are outstretched to cover up gently the multitude of his sins, as the fresh green leaves and graceful flowers cover over the rents and scars of a fallen ruin, and we leave the judgment on the dead King to be passed by Him who, when He died upon the Cross, could still pray for His enemies, saying: "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do."

And the lesson for us is to take large, compassionate, and hopeful views of even those men and women whose lives are marked by terrible passions and disorders, and whose earthly end is often one of darkness and failure. No man is simply a monster of iniquity. In the darkest lives there are some bright and holy spots. A tender and thoughtful writer has said: "The great Seers and Masters of human nature, who reveal the secrets of all spirits, never depict a man as wholly corrupt and evil, . . . they take us behind the appearances; they show us the complicated perversions of his heart, the disordered lights through which he looks at things, the circumstances and the provocations that have deranged him; and thus utter disgust is displaced by a fearful pity. The worst man becomes less hideous when he is known. We understand how such things

may be, how they lie within the compass of nature; that the seeds of such passions exist in ourselves, and might, by possible circumstances, have been brought to a head."[1] And David, the man whom Saul had most cruelly wronged, felt all this; for he no sooner heard of the downfall and ruin of the great King, and of Jonathan, whom he loved, than he took his harp, and in sweet and yet mournful strains sung their funeral dirge: "How are the mighty fallen. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided." And if David, then still more we, who have learned of Christ, should enter into that spirit of large hopefulness and boundless compassion, which realises how good and evil are confused and mixed in human lives, and rejoices that every fallen man and woman pass away from our poor fallible judgments into the presence of Him "who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust," and "whose mercy endureth for ever."

And thus this study of the life of Saul closes with a lesson for us all. You who now read his life may be young and hopeful and earnest: you stand amid the bright promises of early life; among the prophets you have felt the inspiration and joy of the higher life; you are full of all generous emotions; you are determined to live a noble and heroic life. May God help you to realise all your desires. For you the lesson has been pointed out: let it come with all the force which the career of Saul can give it. Or perhaps you are looking

[1] J. H. Thom: "Laws of Life after the Mind of Christ," p. 209.

sadly back on all these youthful enthusiasms as things of the past. They are gone; the bright morning promise has passed away. You look back and say—

> "There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream.
> It is not now as it hath been of yore;
> Turn wheresoe'er I may,
> By night or day,
> The things which I have seen I now can see no more."

In some moments you may be disposed to laugh and mock at those brighter days which once were yours. You may wish they could be utterly forgotten, that you were never haunted with the vision of what you once were and ought still to be. You say it was nothing more than the vain dream of youth, which the hard facts of life were sure to dissipate. You are not in your best and truest mood when you think thus. You are nearer the truth when you look back with sadness and regret, and wish that you could recall the lost joy, wish that you could recover your early enthusiasm for a noble life. You are in a better state when you cry—

> "Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife."

But the wild pulsation is gone, and nothing will ever bring it back again. Yet you need not despair. Some better thing may be yours. God is still speaking to you. The Holy Spirit is still your Friend. You may

stand again among the prophets. The early sunrise may be long past. The splendour of the noon-day possibly has also gone by: night is drawing on. But, if you seek the humble and the contrite heart which God will not despise, the evening sky may be filled with soft mellow light, and your sun go down in the sure promise of a bright to-morrow.

The Life of Ministry.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND THE SERVICE OF MAN.

"Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:
. . . . . and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

—WORDSWORTH.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God: He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."—JOHN xiii. 3–5.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."—MATT. xxv. 40.

"I do not believe in a religion which leaves the heart untouched, in a religion which does not energetically call forth abnegation and sacrifice. The faith which saves is the faith that impels us to save others."—BERSIER: *The Gospel in Paris*, p. 14.

"All may of Thee partake:
Nothing can be so mean
Which with this tincture, 'for Thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine."

—GEORGE HERBERT.

XIV.

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND THE SERVICE OF MAN.

It was said by Wordsworth in praise of Milton that his "soul was like a star, and dwelt apart," and that yet his heart "the lowliest duties on herself did lay." The words describe with singular felicity a character that unites the loftiest spirituality with lowly service, that blends the calm saintliness that loves to dwell in a region untroubled by the strife and passion of the common world with a human sympathy that gladly takes upon itself every humble duty. They describe a beautiful combination of virtues which we do not often see, but which we feel must be a realisation of the true ideal of life. For the highest type of character must be one which unites spiritual aspiration with lowly service, a Divine life that cannot rest satisfied with the seen and temporal, and yet which finds in all the common ways of life—in the "common round" and "the trivial task"—an adequate sphere in which to exercise itself.

It is undoubtedly one of the great aims of Christ's teaching to unite these contrasted principles in man's life. Those who possess the Spirit of Jesus become thereby citizens of two worlds. They experience a

new sense of the awful nearness and reality of the eternal world, and yet they find earth irradiated with a fresh glory. Christ binds the soul with the cords of love to Himself. He inspires it with heavenly affections and longings; but He also commands it with fresh authority to all lowly duties, and lays upon it, with fresh emphasis, the claims of this world. He indissolubly unites the service of man with the service of God.

It is in the closing scenes of the life of Jesus, as recorded by the Apostle John, that we find the supreme illustration of this principle. St. John not merely relates the things which Jesus did, but also gives us hints of what was occupying His mind at the same time. And we see, especially in the pathetic events that preceded the Crucifixion, that our Lord was moving, as it were, in two worlds. His soul was dwelling upon unseen and eternal things, and yet He was filled with inexpressible sympathy for His disciples. His mind was occupied with vast thoughts concerning whence He came and whither He was going, concerning His eternal power and authority; and yet also He was ready to undertake the lowliest duties which Divine condescension and pity could suggest. Already the shadow of the Cross was falling upon His Spirit; He foresaw the coming agony and death; and yet those dark visions only lent an added tenderness and self-forgetfulness to His relations with His followers. All the way through those last tragic scenes of the Passover Supper, the Garden, and the

Cross, we behold the same union of deep thoughts concerning God and eternal things united with loving sympathy and care for others. In this way our Lord, by His own example, taught us that the most elevated saintliness should be combined with lowly service and tender human sympathy. Those scenes illustrate with great freshness and power the truth that those who are filled with a living sense of eternal things are not thereby unfitted for the humble duties and common interests of this world.

This thought is especially suggested by the striking scene of our Lord washing His disciples' feet. In that scene St. John withdraws the veil from both the heart and life of Jesus. He informs us of what the Master was thinking as well as what He did. For Jesus to solemnly wash His disciples' feet would have been a most suggestive deed at any time. But the act gains new meaning and beauty when taken in connection with what was occupying His mind. And "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God"—with His mind dwelling on those vast and sublime facts, "He riseth from supper," and proceeded to wash His disciples' feet.

Now the lesson I wish to draw from that scene is, that our Lord has shed a new glory and beauty upon the life of self-forgetful service by making it the outcome of a profound spiritual faith. He presents in closest union the spiritual elevation and the human tenderness of the Christian life. He brings together

its height and its depth—the heaven to which it may rise, the earth to which it should bend. He teaches us that the disciple is most like his Master who is characterised by spiritual loftiness and by lowly services. He shows us that those who most truly realise the eternal world to be their home and element should yet find a new charm and sacredness in common life; that the man of faith and prayer should yet be a man of active kindness and of healthy human sympathies. Let us endeavour to develop that thought.

When the Gospel first appeared in the world, men had practically come to regard this life, with its manifold interests and duties, as the only one with which they need concern themselves. There was, it is true, a dim and hesitating belief in an eternal and future state. But for the practical purposes, the hopes and the interests of life, men did not extend their thoughts beyond the seen and temporal. There had been innumerable speculations concerning whence man came, and whither he was going, and the object of his existence. In every age there had been the most passionate desires to penetrate the unseen. Nowhere had men been able to leave spiritual problems alone. Among the Jews there was a vague belief in spirits and in a general resurrection. Among Greeks and Romans there were fanciful dreams as to what might be hidden beyond the impenetrable darkness—dreams of Elysian fields and of mysterious laws of retribution. But the one fact which all were forced to acknowledge was

that they had no certainty about these things. No one could say: I know them to be true. The world beyond, the whole region of the spiritual and the supernatural, was for them one of vague yearning, of hope, of terror. And the result was that, although these beliefs flickered and trembled and burst into flame, and then again burnt low and dim, but never went wholly out, for all practical purposes they endeavoured to put them aside, and to surrender themselves to the effort of making the best of this life.

Now to the world thus bounded and narrowed by the limits of time and sense, Christ came, and "brought life and immortality to light." He lifted the impenetrable veil, and showed that this life was only the prelude, the vestibule to a vast spiritual existence beyond. The true life, the great life, embraced more than the seen. He brought man face to face with the eternal world and all its transcendent realities. He showed us that we belong to it. Man comes from God and goes to God. Just as truly as he stands within this visible order and is bound by its duties and obligations, so he stands within a spiritual and eternal order and is bound by its ties and duties.

In this way Jesus brought into view the sublime realities concerning man's relation to God and eternal things. His teaching compels us to feel that all which belongs merely to the earthly order of things, its hopes and fears, pomps and degradations, losses and gains, tragedies and comedies, sink into utter insignificance compared with those realities that appertain to the

spiritual order. He awakens in every thoughtful mind a profound seriousness, a new consciousness of God, a new sense of the spiritual issues of life. He flings upon this world the awful shadows of the world to come, and sends a voice ever echoing through the hearts of men: "Be ye also ready."

Now it is just here that a strong objection has been brought against the teaching of Christ. "You Christians," it is said, "with your faith in eternity, forget the duties of time. You are so absorbed in the contemplation of what awaits you beyond the grave, that you are in danger of neglecting this world, and leaving its concerns to those who live avowedly for themselves." And thus there are those who seriously desire, in the interests of philanthropy, and of a more active interest in the affairs of this life, to shut out the eternal and the unseen from man's thoughts altogether. "We do not," they say, "want to trouble ourselves about those ideas of a spiritual state which rest on no basis of experience. We want only to deal with man's life here—his home, his duty to his neighbours, his earthly sorrows and cares. We only ask ourselves how we may render some service to humanity now, and so make man's life beautiful, happy, true. We only regard present duties and practical things." These are the ideas, we are assured, that will shape the religion of the future, and will lead the world into paths of happiness and progress never reached before, and will teach men lessons of lowly and self-forgetful service which are not to be gained from the life and teaching of Jesus.

But it will occur to you at once, that to represent our faith in the eternal world as seriously antagonistic to the interests and duties of time, and especially to represent it as hostile to that spirit of self-forgetful service which cheerfully undertakes the humblest duties for others, is only to caricature it. Christ's example of love and sacrifice has been the great power lifting the world along the path of charity and pity. No doubt there are men whose religion is only a subtle form of selfishness. Their interest in spiritual things awakens no generous emotions; it throws no glory on their present life: they serve God for a reward. Their only anxiety about the world to come is to keep out of it as long as possible. But such are not the true representatives of Christianity. There is an acted parable of the Gospel in the example of Jesus. It was when He was dwelling upon the realities of the eternal world that He bowed to the lowly task of washing His disciples' feet. It was when everything in this world looked dark and terrible, and a death by torture was just at hand, that He gave this most significant example of disinterested service. And in this way our Lord taught us that a true sense of eternal things sheds a new glory upon this life, that it consecrates the lowliest duties, and is the true inspiration of all those deeds of self-forgetful love which have won the admiration of the world.

Wherever and whenever the spirit of Jesus has been allowed to exercise its true power over the heart, such has been its influence. It has not made men negligent

of the claims of the present. It has not diminished their interest in this life. Whilst it has thrown the emphasis of existence on eternal things, it has also thrown, for their sake, a new glory on this world, and has awakened a new interest in all its duties. It has almost created the virtues of humble service and self-sacrificing love. It has sweetened all the intercourse of social life, and has irradiated with new charm and beauty all common things. There is not a department of man's life that has not received some moral enrichment through the power of a living faith in eternal things. There is not a nook or corner of existence in which you will not find some immortal fruits and flowers that have sprung up under its heavenly inspiration.

And in no direction do you see its power working more clearly than in the way in which it has urged the Disciples of Jesus to follow their Master in the path of lowly service. Those Christians who have most truly felt "the powers of the world to come," have been the first to catch the significance of Christ's washing His disciples' feet. If they have not literally copied that striking act of self-abnegation, they have followed out its spirit in a thousand forms of loving service. Spiritually-minded men and women, who have risen above the strife and passion and petty ambitions of a worldly life, who have seemed to dwell apart amid heavenly contemplations and realities, have gladly laid upon themselves the lowliest duties, and have gone forth, in the spirit of Christ, to serve the world. In the wards of hospitals, in prison cells, in wretched courts

and lanes; amid the terrors of the battle-field and the horrors of the leper's seclusion, they have accepted the most menial duties, and have borne the most terrible exposures. They have watched by the sick and poor, they have comforted the aged and dying; and in so doing they have seen all these sacrifices transfigured by that faith in eternal things which has been the inspiration of them all.

You will learn then, first of all, from this subject, that it is a fatal mistake to dissociate the service of man from the service of God, to cut off the life of self-sacrifice from the spiritual faith that has hitherto inspired it.

It is a remarkable characteristic of our time that Christians are not alone in acknowledging the obligations of disinterested goodness. Other advocates have arisen who profess, as we have seen, to show us a "more excellent way." Positivism has glorified the principle, and has set up the Worship of Humanity as the only true religion. Socialism is a name covering a great variety of aims and opinions, some of them perfectly moral and exceedingly desirable, others not so; but all its sects advocate the duty of self-sacrifice. This principle then of unselfish goodness, of altruism, is recognised on all hands. No doubt there are still those who believe that every man's first duty is to look out for himself, and to make his own happiness and prosperity his only consideration; but all modern teachers unite in telling us that self-sacrifice is good, is beautiful, is right. It is just now the fashionable creed of the intellectual world.

Well, we do not, of course, complain of this. It should be a matter for gratitude that men and women, whatever be their creed or lack of creed, are found ready to endure toil, danger, irksome duties, and even to sacrifice their lives for their fellow-creatures. This glorification of the Christian spirit by those who refuse to look beyond the visible world is a very significant feature of our day. It ought to lead all who profess to be Disciples of Christ to again consider their Master's teaching, and to follow in His footsteps with renewed zeal.

But it is well to ask what hope there is that the spirit of self-sacrificing love will survive when it is effectually cut off from the spiritual roots from which it has sprung. When men have given up faith in God, in the soul, in the eternal future, and in the redeeming love and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; when they have surrendered all the hopes and encouragements that spring from Christianity, and have gone back to the old heathen view of life, or something worse, and believe that man is nothing more than the highest animal, and that death is the utter extinction of the personal life; when they have done this, will they still go on to cultivate the spirit of love and self-sacrifice and lowly ministry to the poor and suffering? It is impossible to say what they would do. Nothing can be determined from the spirit and conduct of those individuals who have already surrendered their faith; for they live in the midst of a Christian civilisation, and are unconsciously influenced

by its spirit and ideals. We have no reason to think that the Christian view of life and duty would survive if the Christian faith were really lost. Retain the old faith in the spiritual order, and you have a soil in which Christian love and duty can grow. Believe that every man, however poor and wretched and sinful, is yet a spiritual being, an object of God's love, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and the heir of an immortal destiny, and then you have all the motives for disinterested service. Then you have a faith that can strengthen and sustain you in the path of duty. Let us, then, be on our guard against those men who say that the Christian faith may be given up, and yet the Christian ideals of life retained. Everything narrow and unreasonable in our view of the truth let us gladly surrender; we should desire to keep nothing that will not bear the light, that will not endure the severest sifting and examination. But the deep, enduring, central truths of the Gospel—our faith in God, in Jesus Christ, in the spiritual order of the world—we cannot surrender; for we know that they are the inspiration of all noble living here, that they alone can sustain that life of enthusiastic service for mankind which has been displayed by the noblest Christian saints.

And now I desire to make, in conclusion, the further remark, that just as we cannot hope that the spirit and example of Jesus will permanently survive when cut off from the faith of Jesus, so, on the other hand, the faith of Jesus will live only in name unless it is

united with a constant effort to follow His example. This is our great danger. The world is very full of people who profess the Christian creed, but who do not live the Christian life. But far better that a man should deny the faith of Christ, whilst yet endeavouring to follow His example and manifest His spirit, than that he should profess to believe the teaching of Christ, and should call Him "Lord, Lord," and yet deny Him in his life. Nothing will so soon cause a man's religion to become a mere form, and his meditations on unseen things a vain and fruitless speculation, as for him to live shut up in himself, absorbed in care for his own soul and in preparation for eternity, and yet all the time remaining a hard-hearted man, and never following in the steps of Him who gave His life a ransom for many and who condescended to the lowly act of washing His disciples' feet, even when the shadow of the bitter Cross was falling upon His spirit, and all the supreme realities of the unseen world were engaging His thought.

Let me, then, urge you to unite with spiritual thoughtfulness, and earnest inquiry into the truth, and faith in unseen and eternal things, a life of practical benevolence and of tender, human sympathy. No doubt there are many who, in their anxiety to do good and show sympathy with the poor and needy and suffering, make foolish mistakes. You need not do that. There are spheres in which all who desire to follow in the steps of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ can find ample opportunity for service. And, I

say, it will save your religion from becoming a mere thing of the emotions or of the intellect if you will endeavour to unite with high thought and spiritual feeling some practical service for the good of others. It is this union which we so much need to-day. The Christian life is too partial and imperfect. The pure beam of its light is refracted and broken, and the lives of Christ's followers shine with only an imperfect radiance. We want the full-orbed splendour, the perfect beam of light, in which deep thought and elevated feelings and lofty spirituality and active service all unite and blend; showing that the Christian is alive to the claims of both earth and heaven, the service of man and the service of God. Be it ours to realise this life, and then may it, at last, be said of us—

> "He went in the strength of dependence
> To tread where his Master trod,
> To gather and knit together
> The family of God.
> With a conscience freed from burdens,
> And a heart set free from care,
> To minister to every one
> Always and everywhere."

THE SERVICE OF MAN.

"For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven."—SHELLEY.

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep."—ACTS xiii. 36.

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."—MATT. xxiii. 11.

"My enthusiasm of self-forgetfulness shall be the greatness of my power, my loss shall be my gain, my death shall be the strength of my life."—MATHESON: *Moments on the Mount.*

"Jesus, Master, whom I serve,
Though so feebly and so ill,
Strengthen hand and heart and nerve
All Thy bidding to fulfil;
Open Thou mine eyes to see
All the work Thou hast for me."

XV.

THE SERVICE OF MAN.

THERE is a biography in this brief epitaph. It sums up with wonderful completeness the life of Israel's great king. And yet it needed the spiritual genius of St. Paul to coin it; for David's career was outwardly so unique, brilliant, successful, that a halo of glory has gathered round it, and often blinds men to its deeper moral significance. Had personal aggrandisement been his aim, he could have desired nothing more splendid. And the world gazes with admiration and wonder on great outward achievements, and thinks too little of how they have been gained, or the ends to which they have been consecrated. But as St. Paul looks back on that great figure, he discerns, amid all the magnificence of royalty and worldly greatness, one who was the true servant of his generation. He pays homage, not so much to the great gifts which enabled the poor shepherd lad to reach the throne, as to those rarer gifts of faithfulness to duty and noble self-sacrfice which, amid the temptations of his marvellous life, constrained David to live for the good of his age and country.

It is, alas, true that there was more than one shame-

ful crime that left black, ugly stains on his character. There was one fearful deed of sudden passion which irreparably disfigured the stately fabric of his life; and the more we think of it the more we wonder how David, with his nobility of soul, could have sunk so low, or, having sunk, could yet rise again. But there the foul stains and ghastly scars must remain, a warning to all men how noble natures may be suddenly swept away into the black gulfs of passion and cruelty.

We must, however, remember that no man's life is a rounded and perfect whole. Into every life some black threads are woven which mar its symmetry and beauty. David was not always true to his ideal; but God does not finally repudiate a man for that. There would be little hope for the best of us if He did. The Bible, in dealing with its great characters, is calm, just, discriminating. It never excuses or justifies the wrong; but it penetrates within, and judges them, not by the gleams of sunshine, or sudden storms which sweep over the surface, but by their main currents, their motives, and aims. And thus, looking back on this man, on all he endured and achieved, it neither emphasises his virtues nor his vices, the depths to which he sank nor the heights of glory and heroism to which he rose, but sums up his life in the brief, pointed, comprehensive words: "He served his own generation by the will of God."

The age in which King David appeared was full of unrest and danger. The people were just emerging from the condition of wild, hostile tribes to an appre-

hension of brotherhood and unity. The evil fruits of the long period of anarchy under the Judges had not wholly passed away. A new consciousness of strength was growing up, and dreams of a great future were beginning to haunt Israel. There was a growing ambition to fill a conspicuous place among the nations, and therefore it was a time when a man of great military and governing powers could obtain almost unlimited influence. Saul's life had ended in disaster. He had proved a failure. The great want of the age was a man who could unite those loose tribes into one compact and independent Kingdom—a ruler who could make Palestine the tranquil home of a free people devoted to the service of the Righteous God, and engaged in the peaceful arts and industries of life. He must be a man of extraordinary gifts—a born warrior and leader of men. He must realise the noblest ideal of earthly majesty and royalty, and also be able, by the force of his own spiritual fervour, to fill the people with a living sense of the presence of God. The inner longing of the age seemed to breathe itself out in the desire: Oh for a hero who could express for us the highest ideal of national life, and lead us on to its realisation.

Such was the want; and David, with his wonderful gifts, appeared to satisfy it. He awakened towards himself a passionate loyalty, and yet also called forth a new national sense of God. He established order and tranquillity. He welded those jealous tribes into one solid kingdom, and touched and suffused them

with the higher spirit of religion and patriotism. He gave the people an ideal of true kingship which they never lost. He overthrew their numerous foes, and took away the fearful dread of foreign invasion, and quickened a new love for art, refinement, civilisation. And all this he did in the face of difficulties that seemed insurmountable. His life was one long heroic struggle for the good of Israel, darkened and embittered towards its close by evils which he brought on himself, and yet, on the whole, and in the long run, true to the great duties that had been laid upon him. From youth to manhood, and from manhood to old age, he pressed forward with ceaseless endeavour to fulfil his mission; and when the struggle was all over, and the aged King sank into the silence and peace of death, no truer or more beautiful epitaph could be written of him than these words, so many long ages afterwards spoken by St. Paul.

Look, firstly, at the mission of life as suggested by this epitaph. It is the opposite of that which may be said to generally prevail. Has not the question already haunted you: "How can I make my generation serve me? How can I use mankind so as to build up my own life, and advance my own interests, and secure my own enrichment and glory." It is a common notion that in proportion as a man rises in the social scale he lifts himself above the law of service. Wealth and rank are coveted because they are thought to relieve their happy possessors from the thrall and burden of

toil. The king can command his subjects to serve him. The rich man can surrender himself to his own enjoyment. David's life is only then duly appreciated when we remember that, although he was a king, possessed of vast authority and power, and gifted with the highest resources of genius, he was still a serving-man. Had he said: "I will make my generation serve me; it shall provide a throne for me, and in the generations to come I shall secure an illustrious place in history," he would have echoed the sentiment which has only too often prevailed among distinguished and royal persons.

And especially has this been so in the East. "I command men to serve me" has been the spirit in which a king of the Egyptian and Assyrian type ruled. His throne was a solitary splendour, built up, too often, on the lives of slaughtered men, and only surrounded with trembling slaves. The millions over whom he ruled lived only for his glorification and service. He claimed the wealth of the rich and the talents of the wise. The young men had to form his armies, and the fairest of the women fill his harem. Whatever the land could yield which men most desire, was poured forth at his feet. And thus he was lifted up into a region of lonely magnificence, from which he seldom descended, except to gratify gross sensual appetites or to carry out cruel, exterminating wars.

And yet in every age there has been a mighty protest, gathering in volume and emphasis as the years roll on, against this ideal of kingship. There

is a growing conviction that high station, and exceptional gifts and great resources only increase the obligation of service. The nobler the position, the greater the power, the wider the extension of the field of duty. The king should be the true man of the people, the true father of his country. The duke should be the dux, a real leader, and not a gilded social inutility. He should be capable of showing the way, and taking the first place, and bearing the heaviest burden in the nation's life. And do we not call the head of the government the Prime Minister, *i.e.*, the chief servant? These are all set in lofty positions that they may serve in a higher way; and so if God has bestowed on you great gifts, and placed you in a position of dignity and power, He expects you to render the more efficient service.

It was this truth which Christ emphasised. He brought a new ideal, a new standard, a new conception of noble manhood. When He saw His disciples disputing among themselves "which of them should be accounted greatest," He said that it was only among the kings of the Gentiles that that kind of lordship was enforced. In the new order He was introducing, another law would prevail—by another path would the highest place be reached. "He that will be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all." In other words, self-realisation is reached by self-sacrifice. He who would make the best of life must live to serve. The path to divinest honours is open to all; for the greatest man is not he who can extract the most

homage, but confer the highest good. The loftiest throne is for him who can perfectly forget himself. And therefore the first place in the Kingdom of Heaven is reserved for Him who took the least thought of Himself, and who most perfectly identified Himself with that humanity whose sins and sorrows He bore.

And this has ever been the ideal which the noblest spirits have formed of the mission of life; and because of their disinterested devotion to the cause of humanity, their names shine in pure, fadeless glory to-day. For there is a wise irony in History. She sits upon her throne of impartial justice; and while she pours contempt upon the men who have lived for their own glorification, or sinks their names into deserved oblivion, she calls forth the great patriots, martyrs, servants of humanity, and places upon their heads crowns of deathless fame. Hence it is that men like King Alfred and William Wallace and George Washington and David Livingstone still live in the world's heart, and that their memories are clothed in undying splendour. Hence it is that whilst "bejewelled duchesses" and fine ladies of the court pass away, and are never heard of more, women like Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Fry shine for ever in pure, fadeless beauty. In this way History, in her own wise, just, impartial way, bears testimony to the true law of life.

And this thought is further commended to us by the consideration that the principle of service is one that affords the most happiness. It is that which braces up character and supplies the needful discipline of life.

It is that which issues in truest nobility and power. We see occasionally the veil lifted from off the daily lives of those who enjoy all the advantages which rank and wealth can supply, but who devote themselves to no useful work. And who will not confess that it discloses a dreary sight? We behold men and women, still in the vigour of life, who bear noble names, who have culture, money, leisure, and who ought, from their exalted positions, to exercise a salutary influence on the nation's life. But instead of that, having no noble pursuit, their whole endeavour is to kill time. As the years and months pass, they occupy themselves with sport, with balls, with theatres, with the idle gossip of the drawing-room and the club. The day is spent on the race-course, the night at the gambling-table. Any dissipation which will lift the unspeakable weariness from life and touch it with a false and momentary glow is sought after. The law courts, with their shameful recital of hideous crime and lust; the last novel, empty of everything but impossible adventures and thinly veiled vice; the last sickening story of unfaithfulness and ruined domestic peace: these things, together with the pleasures of the table, fill up their empty lives. These are the people who ask whether life is worth living. Pampered, bloated, incapable of noble effort, instead of serving their generation and leaving the world the better for their presence, they are the corrupters of the nation, the parasites and leeches which stick upon the social system, absorbing its vitality and sucking out its life-blood.

Oh! my young friends, I implore you to recognise the principle of service as expressing the true mission of life. All who have lived most nobly have lived to serve. All who are most gratefully remembered to-day lived "not unto themselves." What are you doing? What is your ideal of life? I call on you to live with the sense of some worthy duty to fulfil. "Find your work and do it." Lay out your life so that by your energy, faithfulness, enthusiasm, you may be able to make some contribution to the world's progress. David was a king, soldier, poet; but he so used his gifts and opportunities that they became subservient to the welfare of the nation. And you, whatever your vocation or place in the great system of modern life may be, are called to minister to your generation. It is this idea of service as the duty of the highest as of the lowest which is slowly transforming the world. All men and women capable of a noble enthusiasm are feeling that they were not sent into the world to live like butterflies or parasites, but to perform some useful work for which the world is waiting. Do not form a less worthy ideal for yourself; but resolve that, God being your helper, you will belong to the consecrated host of those who have done their duty, who have been the servants, and therefore the true nobility and rulers of the world.

Think, secondly, of the *opportunity* of service. David not only served, but "he served his own generation."

Now there are various ways in which we may unfit ourselves for serving our own age.

We may live too much in bondage to the past: we may be too much influenced by its ideals, its conceptions of truth, its methods, and its institutions. I would not say one word to weaken any man's gratitude to past generations, or his admiration for all they accomplished. Many of the best things of life were secured for us by the heroisms and sacrifices of other days. Almost everything we hold most dear is a precious heritage, won for us by noble men and women whose names we should hold in grateful reverence to-day. A nameless pathos and significance are given to life when we think of these things. The liberties we enjoy, the sacred institutions which sustain our lives, the fair order of existence so familiar to us, the treasures of literature, art, civilisation, and good government which we possess, represent the blood, the toil, the suffering, the energy of our fathers. All these precious things have heen handed down to us by the martyrs and patriots who counted not their lives dear, so that they might secure these rich gifts for their own and following generations.

And yet it is possible for us to dwell on the past until we unfit ourselves to help our own generation. A man may think of the noble men of past generations, and of the great ages of faith and conflict, and of the movements and achievements of other days, until his own age looks vulgar and commonplace. Old modes of thought and methods of action may have too great

an attraction. He may forget that the old order must change and give place to newer methods. He may see no sacredness in life now. "The age," he says, "is too democratic, too revolutionary, too unheroic, too full of change." And so he stands aside, criticises, obstructs, or does nothing at all. Had he only lived then and not now, had his lot been cast there and not here, he would have done something for the world; but out of all sympathy with his age, and out of touch with the living present, he stands looking wistfully backwards, vainly trying to bring back a vanished past.

There are other men who fail to serve their age because their interest is all in the future. They think the present order of things is so corrupt that it is no use trying to mend it. The whole social fabric must, they think, be overthrown, and a new state of things built up from the foundation. "What is the use of touching the rotting mass?" they cry. "Things will get worse and worse, and then there will come a great crash, and the whole present order will fall into ruin, and then something better will arise." And so they wait and look coldly on, and criticise and complain, and the world goes on, groaning and struggling slowly forward, and the light of the coming day begins to fall in gentle, cheering beams upon their path; but they are so intent in gazing on the far-distant horizon, and calling for the new age of which they prophesy, that they see not the good which is already extending to their own doors.

If, then, you would serve your own generation, you must have sympathy with it—sympathy with its struggles, its problems, its aspirations. You must have faith in it. This does not necessarily mean that you must approve of all its characteristics, or that you will serve it just as it would wish. David "served his generation *according to the will of God.*" Christ served men although they repelled His service. He never tried to win popularity by saying or doing things to please them; and therefore His service never degenerated into servility. But although the wise, strong man will not flatter his own generation nor pay it foolish and insincere compliments, and so sink into a sycophant, he must have a deep, large sympathy with it, or he will be unable to serve it well.

The opportunity for service, then, is to be found in our own generation. But the present generation contains all that will follow; and the man who serves his own age serves all future ages as well. David served his own generation, but the work he accomplished lived on, and went on repeating itself age after age. Take, for example, his work as an inspired religious poet. He is supposed to have written the Twenty-third Psalm in his youth—at any rate, it gave expression to the experiences of his youth; and we may be sure that, long before he had passed away, that exquisite Psalm was known and loved through the length and breadth of the land, and that in every godly home in Israel of that generation the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd," were a source of comfort

and strength. David, in writing that Psalm, served his own generation; but he also served all succeeding generations. Age after age those words have been read and sung by an ever-increasing multitude. They have been translated into many languages, and have been a joy and blessing to millions. The rich and poor, the happy and the miserable, the living and the dying have felt their beauty and power. To-day, all over the world, they are known and loved. Yes! David served his own generation; but within the womb of that age lay all coming ages; and because he did his work faithfully then, and used his great gifts for the glory of God and the good of men, he laid all after-ages under obligation. He served his own people, he served the Christian Church, he served our forefathers and fathers, he served us and our children; and his work will prove, in the coming years, a blessing to their children, and so on to the end of time.

And if you live a noble life, and do useful work, no man can set limits to the result. Serve your own age, and you will serve all ages. Work for this moment, and you will toil for all coming times. The good you do will go on repeating itself, gathering force and volume as the ages roll, and extending into ever-widening circles.

"Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever."

And now I have only to say, before concluding, that, of all generations that have gone by, there seems to me to have been none in which the opportunities for noble

service were presented to so large a body of people as to-day. In all directions new spheres of usefulness are being opened up, new channels are being formed in which the streams of beneficent activity may flow; and with a tone which all must hear the voice of the Divine Husbandman is crying: "Why stand ye idle all the day long? Go work in my vineyard."

What you are to do is a question you must each answer for yourselves. But a great point is gained when the heart is once really roused with the "enthusiasm for humanity," and the desire is really awakened to know your true vocation and to live your worthiest life. The cry: "Lord, what is it Thou wouldest have me to do?" is certain to receive an answer when it is the prayer of one who is ready to do anything, so long as he can truly serve his brethren. By doing faithfully the work already committed to our trust; by carrying into all the duties of home and daily business a principle of highest integrity and purity; by being to our friends and neighbours all it is possible for us to be in the way of kindly, helpful service; in these ways, homely and quiet though they be, we serve our age.

There are others who have talents and opportunities that call them to wider spheres. There are responsibilities and services to be undertaken in the Church, and in the various departments of national life, from which you should not shrink, although they do involve a sacrifice of time and energy. We greatly need to-day a stronger and nobler public spirit. Others have lived

for us in the past; we are called to live for the present and future.

I address many whose duties and whose lives are not yet fixed. Life for many of you is only just opening out. You are still within the camp, sharpening your weapons for the coming battle. Your life is still an unsolved problem. I ask you: What are you going to be? What are you going to do with your life? Will you allow it, like a cigar, to serve a little enjoyment, and to pass away in smoke? Are you content to live merely for your own selfish pleasure or gain? You bear, it may be, an honourable name. To you have come down the memories, the traditions, the inspirations from the lives of noble forefathers. And will you dare to take your father's good name and stain it with disgrace, or cast upon it the shame of a worthless and useless life? I would awaken within you the ambition to live for the noblest and the best: to live so that when you pass away you may leave the world the better for your presence; and may, through the mercy of God, having achieved the highest ends of existence here, rest in peace and awake again to a glorious life of immortality and service in the world beyond the grave.

A MAN A HIDING-PLACE FROM THE WIND.

"If he hath hidden the outcast, or let in
A ray of sunshine to the cell of sin—
If he hath lent
Strength to the weak, and, in an hour of need,
Over the suffering, mindless of his creed
Or home, hath bent,
He hath not lived in vain."—WHITTIER.

"And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."—ISAIAH xxxii. 2.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 COR. i. 3, 4.

"Thou must forget thine interest in the interest of the lives beneath thee; thou must be oblivious of thy wants in feeling the hunger and the thirst of other souls; thou must take no thought for thyself through the pressure of the one great thought—the burden of humanity, the bearing of my cross."—MATHESON: *Moments on the Mount*, p. 164.

"Our Master all the work hath done;
He asks of us to-day,
Sharing His service, every one
Share too His Sonship may.
Lord, I would serve and be a son:
Dismiss me not, I pray."—T. T. LYNCH.

XVI.

A MAN A HIDING-PLACE FROM THE WIND.

In these words the Prophet draws a picture of what one man may be to another in the hour of calamity. The picture is so full of beauty and graciousness that we cannot wonder the Christian consciousness has seized upon it as a direct prophecy of Christ. It describes with freshness and power what He has done and is doing in the world. Sin-driven and sorrow-smitten men have found Him a Hiding-Place from the wind and a Covert from the tempest. He is pre-eminently the Rock of Ages, the Great Rock in a weary land. To Him the heart turns in its pain and trouble as its only secure Refuge.

> "Jesu, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly,
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high."

Such is Christ. But here the Prophet is describing, in a large, free way, what one man may do for other men: what, in his degree, every man may do, if he be inspired with the right spirit. He describes an ideal life of which Jesus was the perfect example. He is not contemplating any particular individual or any

exclusive age. He only knows that, when society is rightly ordered, there will be a King upon the throne who will reign in righteousness, and that a "man," *i.e.*, any man, every man, will be to his brother man, in the hour of his calamity and distress, "a hiding-place from the wind" and as "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Because the Coming Messiah would be the realised ideal of human character, He would fulfil these functions Himself, and fulfil them with unique and transcendent completeness. In that sense, the prophecy pointed specially to Him. But it is not of Him alone the Prophet is speaking. When he says, with such beautiful simplicity, "a man," he means any man. That is the ideal for every man: that is just what every man should endeavour to be in this stormy and weary world. The Prophet presents a picture of human society with the healing and inspiring and gracious powers which spring out of a living Christian faith in full operation. He sees that, the older the world gets, the more society will be penetrated by a spirit which seeks to shelter the tempest-driven and oppressed, and to inspire hope and joy where now there is weariness and pain. This is the thought I desire to take up, and illustrate from a broad view of life and history. We have a picture of man exposed and exhausted by the wild and fatal forces that lay waste his life. We have combined with this the picture of man sheltered and revived by man, Christ Himself being the Supreme Example. And all this presents a new and beautiful ideal for ourselves.

According to the peculiar characteristics of Hebrew poetry, the images and ideas of this verse are found in pairs. There are two parallelisms. They combine into pictures of terrors and deliverances which, in their full intensity, only those can know who have travelled among the gaunt mountains and deep ravines and vast waterless wastes of those semi-tropical regions that were familiar to the Prophet. The first suggests a picture of a hurricane of wind and rain sweeping out of the mountain gullies, and across the desert, from whose fierce onslaught a friendly hiding-place affords the exhausted traveller protection. In the next group we have the picture of a "weary land," where the mighty granite peaks glow, beneath the awful splendours of the sky, like mountains of fire, and the desert lies, blistered and burnt up by the sun, in dreary, sullen silence, but in the midst of which there is some sweet oasis, with its waving palms and rushing streams and high sheltering rock, where the blinded and footsore pilgrim may find refreshment and rest.

In these images of suffering and exhaustion, the Prophet sets forth the overpowering and fatal forces which desolate man's life. They portray the extremes and contradictions of suffering and calamity. Now it is a howling tempest in which "the waters roar and are troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," and now it is the dazzling splendours of a blazing, cloudless sky, beneath which lies the weary wilderness with its ocean of scorching and blinding sand.

It is a picture of both the tragic and monotonous in life—of man smitten with sudden disaster, and again lingering in dull pain. But the Prophet saw not alone the forces that work ruin in man's life—he saw also those which heal and save. He saw a man in distress, but he saw also "a man" coming to the rescue. He saw a form struggling for its life in the black, weltering chaos; he saw also one going with helping hands to draw the sufferer into shelter and safety. He saw how dull and exhausting life is to many who struggle amid fierce exposures; but he saw other men pouring the rivers of sympathy and joy upon the burning deserts, and rising up like mighty Rocks of protection, so that the weary might look up and be refreshed. And therefore he could gaze upon the tragic and monotonous scene without dismay.

And what are the great outstanding forces against which man has had to contend?

Nature is one. It is true she often smiles upon us. In many respects she is our friend, and is kind. If she did not help us, life would not be possible. But in how many ways she seems cruel. And there was a time when she was more severe than now. The geologist tells us that man dwelt in Europe, and kept up a successful struggle with nature, in a remote past, when that continent was swept and torn by vast cataclysms which changed the whole face of things; when it was inhabited by fierce beasts of prey, and chilled by huge icebergs that drifted from the north; and when, both from his ignorance and helplessness, as well as from

the hardness of nature, man's life must have been vastly more painful than now.

To us nature is more kind. The struggle is less stern. And yet if you take a broad view of life, how true it is still that much of the desolation and weariness of our lot comes from the dread forces of the physical world. How often does nature seem stern, pitiless, destructive. She sends the mildew. She breeds the fever and the pestilence in her vast forests. She sends the storms that sweep our coasts, and wreck our ships, and hurry the young and brave into swift death. She builds up man's life, but she pulls it down again. Man has had to fight his way up, stumbling on diseases of which he did not know the cure; groaning and suffering he has had to find out what things have meant, and quite literally nature has often enough been to him as a terrible storm from which he has longed for shelter.

And yet what are these natural forces that desolate the world compared with those enemies which man has himself created? Think of the forces of superstition, idolatry, unbelief; think of war, revolution, tyranny. How they have swept over nations, continents, generations, desolating the fairest portions of the world, and drying up all fountains of joy and gladness. Every book of history tells you how they have rolled like the sheeted doom of storms over man. That blast of the wilderness, the sirocco wind, is an appalling phenomenon as it sweeps on its fatal way, and raises to heaven impenetrable clouds of burning,

blinding sand, through which the red and sullen sun glares like the eye of a fiend, and before which all living things fall down to be buried alive in one choking, fiery grave. And yet, after all, what is that compared with the sweep of those demons who, in response to man's own summons, move slowly over the world, pouring forth fire and blood and death; beneath whose outstretched wings the nations gather in pale terror? Before them lie smiling fields and happy villages and busy cities; but when they have passed there is slaughter and famine and burning and plague and desolation and weeping.

And you have yet to bear in mind that the forces of evil hidden in the soul itself, its own passion and sin, are the main originating fountains from which spring those things that fill life with oppression and misery. Self-will, self-love, self-exaltation, more than all else turn the world into a sultry desert or fill it with turbulence and suffering. Man heaps up for himself ten thousand sources of misery. The world now moves on beneath a sky laden with black tempest clouds and swept by fierce winds, now it moves beneath a burning sun which scorches up every fair thing. Such is the dark side of life's picture. Such is the aspect the world would present to one who only looked upon man as he is exposed to the fatal forces that desolate his life.

But we must look at the brighter side. The Prophet brings before us a picture of what man has done or is doing to shelter and refresh his suffering brothers,

Christ, the Divine Man, being the perfect example. "And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In the one vision which reveals man bending beneath the cruel blast, and toiling beneath the burning sky, the Prophet sees also man coming to the rescue, drawing his suffering brother from the tempest, and refreshing him from the weariness of life with his help and sympathy. And what I desire you to notice is that human history, on its higher side, is only the story of what noble men and women have done to resist the evils that have assailed man, and to afford him shelter, refreshment, and strength.

Man has often, as we have seen, crouched before nature in an agony of terror. But far back on the dim and distant horizon of history we just catch a glimpse of the faint outline of some of the great ones who in those early ages learned to defy nature, to wrest some of her secrets from her, and to turn them into instruments of service. And behind these bold defiers the world took shelter and breathed free again. And through all succeeding ages God has raised up men who have been carrying on this work, and in no age have they been so numerous as in this. All men who are teaching us to understand nature, to use her, and to turn her powers to noble uses, whose reverent study of nature is bringing to light things that have been hidden since the foundation of the

world, are fulfilling the prophecy of the text. The world gathers behind these men and their work, and finds protection from what used to destroy.

I spoke of the terrible storm of persecution and religious superstition and idolatry. But sooner or later every such corruption has been resisted by some man who has grasped the truth, and through him the world has found shelter, and the wilderness has been watered by fresh and living springs, and the weary land has been shaded by a great Rock. Abraham was such a man. "He laid his back to the practice of his forefathers, and lifting his brow to heaven, was the first to worship the One Unseen God. Abraham believed; and in the shadow of his faith, and sheltered by his example, his descendants learned to believe too."[1] He was the man who delivered the world from some of the darkest superstitions that have defiled it. And therefore he was the father and representative of all those who in every age have fought against ignorance and lies, who have watered the earth with living springs of truth, who have dared to resist superstitions that have grown hoary and respectable with age, who have sown in the barren heart of man the seeds of light and truth. All those who in any age, in however humble a way, have laboured to overcome ignorance, darkness, superstition, and to spread light, truth, and the knowledge of the living and righteous God, have been fulfilling the promise of this text.

[1] G. A. Smith's "Isaiah," p. 252.

I spoke of the fearful desolations which tyranny and despotism have caused; but every evil power has in the end been met and overcome by some brave man whose soul God has filled with a passion for freedom. Moses was such a man. He was indeed to the down-trodden slaves of Egypt "a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And he was the father and representative of all those who have struck a blow for freedom. He stands at the head of a great line of patriots, soldiers, statesmen, martyrs, behind whom the oppressed, the persecuted, the down-trodden have gathered, through whose sacrifices and sufferings they have found freedom. And so one might go on to speak of many more who have been the helpers and saviours of mankind. The ways in which the expectation of the Prophet has been fulfilled are innumerable. What has saved humanity has been the uprising of noble men in the various ages of the world, who, according to the needs of the times, have set their whole strength to resist the forces that laid waste man's life, and who have had the heart and the greatness to sacrifice themselves so that they might prove shelters to their brethren, and the sources of new life and joy and hope.

And now why may we say that what all these heroes have each done according to their opportunity our Lord Jesus Christ has done gloriously and completely? Why is He pre-eminently the Hiding-Place from the tempest, the River of water in a dry place,

the Shadow of a great Rock in a weary land? Why is it that His Cross has been the hope of men in all ages? Why is it that we sing—

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee"?

Because that Cross expresses the fact that He has resisted the evil power that has laid waste man's life, not as it has appeared in some temporary and accidental form, but in its very essence and stronghold. He was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. He came to destroy sin, and make Himself a hiding-place from its power. He provides a refuge, not from some particular form of evil, but from evil itself. It matters little what relief you bring men until sin is conquered. Christ is the pre-eminent Refuge for souls, because what all others have tried to do in their local, sectional, external way, Christ has done universally, gloriously, for all mankind. His Cross is man's true refuge. He has revealed the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, and has thus imparted a new sense of the nobility and value of life, and has poured new joy into the desert. The old, dull monotony passes away as He is known; life becomes transfigured. The long-sealed fountains are broken up, streams of gladness begin to flow, the flowers spring up, and the wilderness blossoms as the garden of the Lord. The world had got very dry indeed when He came; but since His coming all things have been undergoing renewal. Out of His Gospel have sprung

all those redeeming movements which are slowly transforming the world. It was the hand that was nailed to the Cross that knocked off the fetters of the slave. Christ has given men a new interest in one another. His Spirit is the secret spring whence flows all that is now making this world a brighter and happier place for the millions that toil and suffer. He is at the heart of every great movement and every noble institution that is to-day helping forward mankind.

And now I have only to say that these beautiful words present an Ideal of what your life may be. "If this prophecy distinctly reaches forward to Jesus Christ as its only perfect fulfilment, yet its vagueness permits its application to all, and through Christ its fulfilment by all becomes a possibility." God has made it possible for you to be a Rock, a Shelter, a means of Fertility and Joy to others. How you are to fulfil the ideal you must discover for yourself. What we can each do to shelter our fellow-creatures from the storms that smite them, to pour refreshing streams over their dull lives, we can each best decide for ourselves. Every talent we possess may be employed for that purpose. That is the ideal which is now influencing all the greatest and noblest spirits of this nineteenth century. Are you prepared to accept the ideal, and to make it the endeavour of your life to realise it? Do not say that there is nothing you can do. Many months do not pass over our lives but there crosses our path some distressed soul, driven with contrary winds, and feeling this world to be a

very weary place, to whom we could give some shelter, some relief that would make life brighter. What we can or ought to do is often a perplexing question, but a great step is gained when one has learned to say, "What can I do to make myself a hiding-place from the wind for some distressed soul tossed about in this storm of life? What can I do to pour some sweet and refreshing stream of hope into the dry wastes in which those around me toil? How can I throw some blessed shelter, as of a great Rock, over those who drag out a dull existence in this great desert of modern life?" Will you endeavour to realise this Ideal?

CHRIST'S DISCOURAGEMENT OF INTOLERANCE.

"Saints of many a warring creed,
Alas, have never learned
That all paths to the Father lead
Where self the feet have spurned.
Moravian hymn and Roman chant
In one devotion blend
To speak the soul's eternal want
Of Him, the inmost Friend."

"And John answered and said, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.' And Jesus said unto him, 'Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.'"—LUKE ix. 49, 50.

"For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."—MATT. xii. 50.

"And now I say unto you, 'Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.'"—ACTS v. 38, 39.

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!"—WHITTIER.

XVII.

CHRIST'S DISCOURAGEMENT OF INTOLERANCE.

We are only now beginning to realise how large-hearted Christ was, how free from all jealousies and limitations. There was a stamp of universality on all He did. A world-wide charity breathed through all His sayings. He had none of the narrowness and exclusiveness of the Jew. He looked beyond the bounds of Israel and recognised the goodness and the work of other men. "Whosoever," He exclaimed, on one critical occasion, "shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother." He understood other men, sympathised with everything that was good in them; but He Himself was greater than them all. None of the Apostles showed the same breadth, the same universal charity, as Himself. No other Jewish teacher approached Him in spirit or wideness of outlook. The Scribes and Pharisees sat in their theological schools, breathing the hot choking atmosphere of bigotry, drawing sharp lines of separation between themselves and others, and disputing about infinitely small questions. But Jesus wandered amid the cornfields, and by the mountain sides, and among the familiar haunts of men,

proclaiming a Gospel as free and fresh as the breezes of heaven, and ever manifesting a spirit of charity and of generous appreciation of all noble souls.

One circumstance in particular, recorded by St. Mark and St. Luke, is exceedingly suggestive. On one occasion, whilst Jesus was privately admonishing His disciples regarding their disputes among themselves as to who "should be the greatest," the Apostle John said: "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us." St. John seems to have had a suspicion that their conduct would not altogether meet with the Master's approval. But with that transparent candour which is one of the most impressive features of the Gospel records, he told Jesus what they had done. And immediately Jesus replied: "Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us." It was one of those quiet, private scenes, when, had there been the least element of jealousy or narrowness in the Son of Man, it would have showed itself. But in a moment the magnanimity of Jesus shone forth. There were no eager questions as to who the man was, or whether his mission had been rightly conducted. The disciples admitted that he was doing a good work, and even doing it in Christ's name, and Jesus was satisfied. "There is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me." That the man did not outwardly stand in any close relation to Himself was of no consequence. Jesus had no desire to set up a spiritual monopoly. The work of casting out devils need not be

confined to His disciples. So long as the good work was done, He was satisfied, no matter who the worker was. Many interesting inquiries might be raised in connection with this scene; but it is the relation of the incident to questions regarding the outward following of Jesus, and the spirit of religious intolerance, which we shall now consider.

The disciples of Jesus saw a man who was not of their company casting out devils in Christ's name. They do not doubt the fact. The man was not an impious impostor; he was really doing that work, and Jesus said: "Forbid him not." That is the fact to be considered.

Now, on reading the Gospel story, we meet with two words that have an important bearing on our subject. The word "Church," although familiar enough to us, is found only twice in the Gospels; but on almost every page we meet with the word "Kingdom." The "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Kingdom of God" were expressions constantly upon the lips of Christ, and by Him were used to set forth no visible institution or organisation. The Kingdom was not embodied in any society, civil or ecclesiastical. "It was an ideal hovering in heavenly purity above all earthly realities."[1] Wherever there was a soul cherishing towards God the spirit of reverence and love, and towards man the spirit of brotherhood, there was a member of the Kingdom. He might belong to no outward society. He might not openly follow Christ; but he was a member of that

[1] Bruce: "The Kingdom of God."

spiritual Kingdom which embraces all of every age and clime who fear God and work righteousness. But then every ideal seeks expression and embodiment. "Every great thought which takes a powerful hold of the human mind tends to assume visibility as a historical movement, and to become the organising principle of a new society."[1] Hence, in addition to proclaiming the Kingdom, Jesus established the Church. The Church is a visible and corporate Society, created to embody the Spirit of the Kingdom. We see Jesus calling upon one and another to follow Him, and constituting them into a little company round His own person. Towards the close of His life, His main interest seemed to be in those personal followers and disciples. They went with Him everywhere. His aim was to form them into one compact, united Body, organised for His service on earth. They were the nucleus of the Church which was to bear witness of Him, and to realise the ideals of His Kingdom.

And yet we must bear in mind that the Kingdom was wider than the Church. The little company of professing disciples did not embrace all who were really devoted to the Master. There were those, like Judas, gathered into the visible fold, who had no real participation in the spirit of the Kingdom. And there were others outside the fold who really belonged to the wider spiritual Society. Here was a man who was not one of the company of Christ's followers. He was not associating with them, not following Jesus from place

[1] Bruce: "The Kingdom of God."

to place, and yet he was doing His work, and even doing it in His name. Why he was not united with the other disciples we do not know, and it is useless to conjecture; but the circumstance is exceedingly suggestive.

To have united with that little society in following Christ would have been a good thing to have done. As far as we can see, it would have been the natural and orderly and noble course to have pursued. But there may have been reasons for his holding back, and walking in isolation from the other disciples, of which we know nothing. However that may be, it clearly was not vital; it was not essential. The vital and essential thing was to be a member of the Spiritual Kingdom, to possess the Spirit of Christ, to be a true son of God, to be engaged in doing the will of God, to have a living sense of brotherhood with men. In other words, the Kingdom of God is primary and paramount, and above everything else; and to have entered into it, and to be engaged in realising its ideals, is the all-important thing. The Church is, in relation to the Kingdom, an altogether subordinate and secondary idea. And thus it is we see here a man who was within the Kingdom, and doing the work of the Kingdom, and doing it in Christ's name, who yet was not formally united with the brotherhood of the disciples.

And therefore the vital questions for the Church lie quite outside those which are usually debated so vehemently; they do not relate to apostolic succession, historic continuity, validity of sacraments; establish-

ment or disestablishment, Episcopacy or Presbytery, or anything else of that kind. The really vital questions lie in quite another region. How far do any of the Churches to-day realise the Ideals of the Kingdom? How far are the Churches the homes of men who love God, who are devoted to righteousness, who are engaged in casting out the modern devils that plague mankind? If Christ were to return amongst us, whether would He be most in sympathy with the Churches, or with those who are working outside of them?

Now there is much that is going on in the world that awakens new and striking interest in this man whom the disciples wanted to suppress, but whom Christ commanded them to leave alone.

On the one hand we have in our midst, as the most conspicuous and venerable and splendid organisation in the world, the Church or Churches of Christendom. It is an impressive fact that, through all those eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since that little company of disciples gathered round Christ, the Corporate Body which He then founded has lived on. It has passed through every form of glory and disgrace. A terrible story could be told of its shameful failure, its corruption and its suffering: "It has looked like an obscure and unpopular sect; it has looked like a wonderful human institution, vying with the greatest in age and power; it has looked like a great usurpation; it has looked like an overgrown and worn-out system; it has been obscured by the outward accidents

of splendour or disaster; it has been enriched, it has been plundered; at one time throned above Emperors, at another, under the heel of the vilest; it has been dishonoured by the crimes of its governors, by truckling to the world, by the idolatry of power, by greed and selfishness, by unbelief in its own mission, by the deep stain of profligacy, by the deep stain of blood."[1] Such, in brief, is the story of its shame. But, again, who could tell the story of its splendid triumphs, and services to mankind? As you glance back through those long past ages, you see slowly moving through the aisles of the Church the noblest, purest, most gifted of every generation. These fought against her corruptions. They loved the Church of God, suffered for her, and for her gave their tears and blood. By their zeal and services her influence spread: she overthrew paganism; she spread literature and art; she civilised the nations, and was for long, dark ages the only power working for the progress of mankind. And thus, with all this long, strange history of mingled shame and glory, disgrace and honour, evil and good, the Church has come down to us broken, divided, blessed, cursed, torn with heresy and schism, but still living on; and to-day we sit beneath her shadow—on us has fallen this great heritage.

But we live in an age of criticism; and, whatever the past has been, the questions we now hear asked are these: Is the Church fulfilling her proper mission to-day? Is she really doing Christ's work in the world?

[1] Dean Church's "Advent Sermons."

If the Churches, as organised bodies, perished, might not the Kingdom of God make itself more profoundly felt? In the language of a thoughtful writer: "A good many are asking such revolutionary questions even now, and it is foolish for Churchmen simply to be shocked, and to characterise them as profane. The Church is only a means to an end. It is good only in so far as it is Christian."[1] And such questions are urged all the more seriously when it is observed how much is now being done for the progress and welfare of the world outside the organised Christian Churches. Much of the most resolute conflict with the evils of society, with the devils of impurity, intemperance, greed, with the misery and degradation in our great cities, is waged by those on whom many within the Church look with impatience or contempt. These facts raise serious reflections.

One thing is certain; we must not oppose or despise or forbid those who are doing this work. We must not thwart or discourage them by unkind criticism. Many of them are going down into hells of impurity and wretchedness, and lifting up, in the arms of loving Christian charity, those who have seemed to us lost beyond hope. If the Churches of to-day venture to forbid and discourage those who are doing noble work because they follow not with them, because they adopt strange methods, and decline to walk in the good old paths, then, depend upon it, their doom is near. There have been times in past ages when the Church has

[1] Bruce: "The Kingdom of God."

done this, when she has boasted of her privileges, and her authority, and the power of the keys, and the grace of her sacraments; and yet all the time she has been practically effete, weighed down with officialism, corrupted with a dead mass of vulgar religious show; and then, because the salt has become corrupt, God has poured contempt upon her, and has raised up men and women who have gone forth despised, persecuted, alone, who have been counted the "offscouring of all things," and have been driven into the fields and among the wild hills to do their work; but God has blessed them, and in the power of the Kingdom they have cast out devils, and raised vast masses from the lowest depths of misery and vice; and now to-day, whilst the impartial historian dismisses those who could only persecute and forbid with a word of contempt or in scornful silence, he brings forward, with loving reverence, the names of these despised and heroic souls, that they may shine, in unfading splendour, in the gallery of immortal fame.

The fact, then, on which we have dwelt is full of interest. It throws considerable light on the relation of the Christian Church to that Divine Kingdom to which all Christ-like men and women belong, and whose ideals and aims the organised Body is called to promote. But this brings before us a danger which I have already suggested, but on which it may be well to make a few further remarks.

Those who are engaged in a good work are always

in danger of ignoring all who labour according to other methods, and who do not belong to their party. And so we can easily understand that Christ's disciples had no sooner been drawn into a more or less compact brotherhood than there would arise a pride of party, a jealousy of their organisation, and a suspicion regarding the work of other men. There would be a strong desire to keep the work of casting out devils as a monopoly of the new brotherhood. And in the same way we can understand that, as the ages have passed, and the Church has become torn with divisions and broken up into fractions, each separate branch of the One Church would tend to cultivate a spirit of exclusiveness and intolerance. For each looks upon itself as the true representative of the Kingdom of God; each prides itself on the success of its own work; each is in danger of watching with jealous eye the success of its neighbour, and envying every sign of its growing prosperity. And in this reference, the conduct of Jesus in throwing the shield of His protecting judgment over this man, and His rebuke of the mistaken zeal of His disciples, is full of significance.

Now there is a legitimate and honourable gratification in belonging to a Church which has had a long and illustrious history. It is a right thing to be very jealous of her honour, and to be very anxious for her success. I do not condemn that. It is like the feeling of patriotism. We do not think it wrong for a man to be proud of his country, to love it, to honour

it, to be ready, if need be, to die for it. Patriotism is not a vague sentiment with no particular meaning in it. It expresses a sense of relation to a vaster and grander life than that of our own individual existence. It implies a feeling of belonging to a mighty past, a great order of things in which our separate lives are merged. It links us on to the mighty dead. It leads us to prize the liberties, the institutions, the land, the good name for which our noble fathers shed their tears and blood. It recalls the sacred scenes of old, the great days when glorious deeds were done and vast sacrifices made, the mere mention of which makes the blood tingle in every vein, the eyes fill with tears. Every man should be proud of his country, and thank God for it. But then even patriotism can sink into a foolish and dangerous sentiment. It does so when it turns into national vanity and glorification, when it leads a man to despise all nations but his own, to look with contempt upon their customs and institutions, and to watch with envy and jealousy their prosperity and peace.

So it is in religion. There are many different Churches represented here this morning.[1] There are assembled here for common worship members of every branch of Presbyterianism in Great Britain; there are Episcopalians and Congregationalists, and Methodists and Baptists; and there is not one of the Churches to which we individually belong that has not had a great and honourable past. There is not one of them but

[1] Innellan Parish Church, July 5th, 1891.

could fill many volumes with the records of splendid achievements, heroic lives, noble sacrifices and martyrdoms. Each one of them is doing a great work for humanity to-day. You are all, I hope, proud of the Churches to which you belong; so am I of the Church beneath whose shadow we assemble now. It is a legitimate and honourable feeling. But suppose that we were each to allow our zeal and affection to degenerate into jealousy and suspicion of one another. Suppose that all the Churches we represent were to grow envious and jealous of each others' success. Suppose that they were to try all sorts of mean ways of thwarting and hindering one another, because their methods were not all the same, because they do not all follow the Master in the same way, because they do not all work on exactly the same lines. And suppose, again, that, in spite of our mutual antagonisms and hatreds, we all unite to disparage and discourage those other workers who do not belong to any of our Churches, but who reach classes which none of us are reaching, who are casting out devils over which we have no power, and so we waste our energies and our opportunities. What will the Master say? What will His reply be when we say, "Lord, we saw these men casting out devils in Thy name, and we forbad them, because they follow not with us?" Will He not condemn us? Will He not say: Cease this mistaken zeal. Be willing to do your own work. Leave one another and these men alone. Be each content to fill your own place, and rejoice that they that are

not against us are for us. I say, let each of us take heed to the danger, lest, when the end comes, we have nothing to show but a life wasted in protesting against the good works of worthier and nobler men.

And thus our subject leads us to cherish the hope that the spirit of Christ's generous and large-hearted teaching will spread among all His followers, and draw them together in the consciousness that, although their names and organisations and methods of work may vary, yet they all, in various ways, serve one Master, and are co-operating in one great cause.

Last of all, I would gather up all I have said in the remark that the supreme question for us individually is not: What is my relation to the Church? or What is the Church to which I belong? but What is my relation to Christ and His Kingdom? I do not wish to undervalue the Church. In spite of all its faults and failures and divisions, I believe that it is immeasurably the noblest organisation in the world, and doing the greatest and most beneficent work for humanity. The Church can confer more honour and greater gifts on all of us than we can ever confer on it. There are very few, if any, who have strength to follow Christ alone, and independent of its aid. There are few excuses for declining to join it that are not miserably feeble and unreal; but still the greatest question is not: Have you joined the Church? but Have you entered the Kingdom? Have you loyally and heartily submitted yourself to God in Christ

Jesus, in the earnest desire to receive His grace, and to do His will, and to serve the interests of His Kingdom? Until these questions are fully weighed and answered, it were well for us to postpone all others.

THE CRY FOR MORE ROOM.

"Each new time its new thought
Must in new words tell;
And the old primary heart tones
In new music swell;
And, in grander theologies,
Higher truth be shown;
But unchanged 'mid all changes,
God's heart and our own."—T. T. LYNCH.

"And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, 'Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell.' And he answered, 'Go ye.'"—2 KINGS vi. 1, 2.

"Never forget to tell the young people frankly that they are to expect more light and larger developments of the truth which you give them."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"I am verily persuaded, I am very confident, that the Lord has more truth to break forth from His Holy Word."—JOHN ROBINSON.

"O Father, Son, and Spirit send
Us increase from above;
Enlarge, expand all Christian souls
To comprehend Thy Love;
And make us all go on to know,
With nobler powers conferred,
The Lord hath yet more light and truth
To break forth from His Word."

—GEORGE RAWSON.

XVIII.

THE CRY FOR MORE ROOM.

This ancient scene is a parable of modern life. It is a type of all noble movements for expansion and improvement. These young men were typical and representative of all who breathe the true spirit of progress. They were bounding with vigorous life; and wherever life is strong and full there is capacity to expand. "The place is too strait for us" has been the cry in every age of vitality. Religious, moral, political, intellectual enthusiasms always seek for wider scope and freedom.

We feel it to be so now. We live in an age when a new consciousness of power, a new eagerness, a new intensity, is stirring the hearts of men. In every direction we witness a new fervour. And, as a result, on every side we hear a cry for more room, for fresh fields of enterprise, for new methods of work, for a Forward Movement. Those who, like Elisha, cling fondly to the old order of life, old institutions, old modes of thought, yet, for the most part, feel that these venerable things must be enlarged and adapted to the growing wants of the age. In no other way can they retain their hold on the affections of mankind. The old things must renew their youth. New skins must be provided for

the new wine that threatens the old bottles with destruction. Whilst paying all honour and reverence to the beliefs, customs, institutions which have built up the fair order of life around us, which gave strength, dignity, hope, to our fathers, we recognise that they may need adaptation and expansion to meet the new conditions and the new needs of to-day. An order of life may have been an unspeakable blessing in the past, and yet you may perpetuate it beyond its time. Much injustice and suffering and oppression may be caused by maintaining it, just as it is, under altered conditions. No one can be wholly blind to the fact that these are the convictions which are now filling the minds of men everywhere. We are passing into a new age, and those who breathe the spirit of these young prophets believe that it will be a better age, when higher principles will prevail; when man's life will blossom into greater beauty, nobility, and happiness; when there will be greater justice and consideration for the least privileged of the people, and a wider and sweeter charity among all men. The Church is not exempt from the new spirit. On all sides the cry is heard: We long for a larger, fuller, nobler life: we want more room to unfold our energies, more freedom to think our own thoughts, and to do our own special work.

It is right to say that such a spirit is full of danger; that it has been the father of revolutions and civil disorders; that it has often swept away in a blind fanaticism much that was good. We need the warning, and should take it to heart. But then every age has

its dangers. If there is danger in life, movement, aspiration, so also there is danger in stagnation, in sleepy indifference, in blind acquiescence in ancient wrongs. The wise man will not complain that the age in which he lives is big with great hopes, and that it is weary of everything that keeps the world from realising the highest possible good. He will not be sorry to find the Church throbbing with new life, dissatisfied with antiquated weapons and methods of work, with worn-out theologies and creeds, and longing to burst all the fetters that hinder it from exercising all its beneficent power upon the world. If he is reminded that this spirit has often led men astray, so that they have tried to secure a higher order by violent and revolutionary methods, he will bear the fact in mind, and be on his guard. But if he believes in God, he will be confident that He is guiding, energising, illuminating the hearts of men, and that He is the secret power leading the world on. He will believe that God is working in and through all the great world movements, and that it is His Spirit which awakens dissatisfaction with all that narrows and dwarfs and impoverishes man's life. He will believe that God is at the heart of these great world-wide movements.

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Consider this principle of human progress.

You will observe that the method by which the world advances is not one which can be described as

a simple, single movement in a straight line. There is a positive and a negative element in it. It is a destructive as well as a constructive process. I will use an illustration. There was a time, far back in the history of our country, when its inhabitants dwelt in caves or found shelter in hollow trees. But, in the course of ages, the hardly developed reason began to contrast those poor conveniences with the purposes for which they were used. The ideal of a better home than a cave or hollow tree rose up, and led to the construction of a hut. And then, as a mud hut was but a poor shelter, the thought came: Why should not I build a better home? It took many ages and generations to get as far as that; but men reached that point. Then again followed a period of criticism, in which the ideal was set over against the building and contrasted with it. The builder said: My work is imperfect; I see where I can make an improvement. And so the ideal was ever seeking to realise itself in a better structure.

That is how the world advances in everything. In every department of man's life you see this slow but inevitable progress. This is the method by which God leads forward mankind. The movement has its secret source in the depths of man's nature. God has created man with a capacity for perfection, and therefore he is always struggling after ideals unrealised. He who has made us for Himself has shot into our souls some ray, some spark, some impress, of His own eternal perfection; and thus we, in strange contrast to the creatures

below us, are ever urged on to make more perfect, more beautiful, whatever our hands find to do. God has lighted up the human spirit with divine ideals of what may yet be; and therefore it is never satisfied, but is ever reaching out after a higher life. Thus it is that the artist has in his mind a more beautiful picture than he has ever been able to put on canvas; and the musician hears, in his own soul, more ravishing music than he has been able to express; and the orator thinks of an unspoken speech, a thousand times more eloquent and persuasive than has ever fallen from his lips. The Eternal Mind which is working in the heart of Humanity is the source of ideals which are never perfectly realised. No sooner has the ideal got embodied in laws, in institutions, in creeds, in constitutions, in churches, than it begins to work destructively. The ideal stands over against the embodiment, and condemns it. It says: This work is imperfect. It must be improved. It must be done over again. And hence everything incapable of improvement, of readjustment, of expansion, soon loses its usefulness and power. This principle of progress is universal and inevitable. It may be delayed for a time. Things may cramp and hold back the world with stubborn pertinacity. But the spirit of all true progress is the spirit of God; and it will surely and inevitably carry the world forward until it has done its work completely.

And let us not suppose that the Church is exempted from this law. Its whole history illustrates it. And many of our perplexities to-day arise from the fact

that there is an ideal of religion dimly dawning upon the minds of men, higher than they hear preached in churches or see practised in daily life.

Now, in relation to this cry for more room, there is much, I think, in this incident that will bear reflection.

Notice, first of all, the hopefulness and energy of these sons of the prophets. "Behold, now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place where we may dwell." There are some men who never get beyond recognising that the "place is too strait for them." There they stop. Their eyes are fixed on the discomforts and limitations and miseries under which the world groans; but they despair of progress and improvement. They seem to take a refined and doleful pleasure in brooding over the evils of the social system. Have you not met such men? They will go over and over the sad catalogue, and mark every shade and expression of evil, and yet never suggest a remedy. "The structure of life," says Schopenhauer, the father of these modern pessimists, "produces the conviction that nothing is worth our efforts, our energies, our struggles; that all possessions are vanity, the world a bankrupt in all quarters, and life a business which does not pay its expenses."

Now, against that spirit of despair I utter an emphatic protest. Despair is utterly unreasonable except when men have lost all faith in God. But you

and I believe in God. We believe that He is the fountain of all those noble ideals and hopes which lead men to believe that a better day is coming, though its coming be slow. We believe that God stands behind this tremendous battle, and that He is ever helping forward the good, the right, the true; and I say that no man who believes in God ought to despair of God's world. No doubt the evil is mighty and deep rooted. The veil has been lifted off the deep plague spots of modern society. We know something of the awful needs, the terrible straitness, under which vast masses groan. The forces which tend to cripple, to hold men back, to crush them down, are tremendous. But we must not despair. God is not dead. He has not forgotten the world which He made and which Christ redeemed. It is practical atheism to give up the struggle as useless, and to abandon God's world as though it were a bad job. Let every man and every woman take his and her beam; let us all unite in the great work, and, with God's blessing, the higher and nobler edifice will rise.

Again I ask you to consider the spirit of loving reverence which these sons of the prophets exhibited towards Elisha, and also the readiness of the venerable prophet to enter into their projects and aspirations. "Let us go," they said to the old man; and he said, "Go." And one said: "Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants;" and he answered: "I will go." These young prophets were men of reverent spirit, and they wished the grey-headed prophet to be united with

them in their movement. It was not their wish to break away from early associations. They had no desire to cast slight on the sacred place which had so long been their spiritual home, nor to abandon the beloved leader who had taught them as a father. They desired his guidance. They wished to carry out the enterprise under his directions. And therefore they begged him to go with them as their responsible leader.

Now there was something very beautiful and suggestive in that act. There is a lesson for those who can rudely sever old ties, who can break contemptuously from early associations, who can jeer and scoff at old friends. No man is likely to do much without reverence. We should remember how much we owe to the past. These venerable men helped us to scale the rocky heights on which truth's temple stands, to enter its golden gates, and to worship before its holy shrines. In times of darkness and bewilderment, when we had well nigh lost the true path, they guided our feet; and although we may not any longer be able to follow them, we should speak of them tenderly and reverently. We are to-day largely what they have made us. We should desire to still have them with us.

But almost more beautiful was the conduct of Elisha. "Go with us," said the young men; and he said: "I will go." The old place was dear through many sacred associations; but he had the wisdom to see that it had served its purpose. Possibly he may have thought the

young men were impatient, and that there was no pressing need for this forward movement. But whatever his regrets, he had sufficient sympathy with the spirit of the new age to consent to changes which he did not himself suggest, and which he possibly did not personally desire. "I will go with them," he seemed to say: "I will throw in my lot with them." And in so doing he showed himself a calm, wise man, worthy of the love and reverence these sons of the prophets lavished upon him.

As we read the history of the Church and the world, and observe the attitude of venerable leaders towards the spirit of progress, we are compelled to regret that the spirit of Elisha has been so uncommon. How few of the enlargements, reconstructions, reforms, which have been the means of saving the Church and nation from stagnation and ruin, have received the support of her responsible leaders! However that may be, we are glad to turn back to this ancient story, to notice that there, at least, age and youth, experience and youthful energy were united in a common enterprise.

And, last of all, I ask you to give your cordial sympathy and approval to the united and unanimous way in which they co-operated to forward this enterprise. They said: "Let us take every man a beam." Every one of them was to do something; all were to unite for the common good.

And in the bringing in of that higher and better age, towards which all things are moving and working, there is something we are all called to do. No one

may take the position of mere negative semi-critical indifference. That is quite impossible to the enthusiastic and the good. There is a beam which every one may bring.

And now I would ask you to consider this question. Suppose that God were to give to this age a great leader of men, who would do for it a work as great as leaders and prophets in the past have done for their ages. What do you think such a man would do? What is the work which you think most needs to be done for this generation? What kind of life do you suppose such a leader would live? It is worth while considering these questions; because, if you have a clear idea of the kind of work that needs to be done, and the spirit and character of the person who is required to do it; if you can say: "That is the kind of man we need to-day; that is just the work which needs to be done," then God is saying to you: "Rise up, and be that man and do that work." For what we can definitely plan for another, we can, to some extent, realise ourselves. You cannot possibly be all you would like to be. You perhaps think of one who is illustrious and renowned, who will leave his mark on this and coming ages, who will shine as one of the brightest stars in the sky of human greatness; and that you possibly may never be. But if you can think of a good work that needs to be done, and of a true life that needs to be lived, then I do say that God is calling you to do that work and to live that life. Obey Him, and He will determine upon the measure

of its greatness and dignity; only, whatever you do, do not be so bigoted as to suppose that you only are a true worker for God. Do not encourage the thought that your method is the only right one, and that what you do is all that needs to be accomplished. You may lay an important beam in the temple, but it requires many beams and many workers to make the "pile complete."

Have then faith in God's work, in human progress, in man's glorious destiny. Be a true and loyal Disciple of Jesus Christ in this nineteenth century. Take a large and generous view of life and of the Gospel. Remember that there are great vital truths you cannot surrender, which it would be disgrace to surrender. Take heed to life's pitfalls and temptations, and endeavour to make life a noble mission. "Find your work and do it," said Thomas Carlyle. It is noble advice, and calls us to a high duty. For there is no greater joy and no greater honour to the Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, the Ideal of all nobleness and beauty, and generous service, than to know their work, and to do it with all their might.

THE END.

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